COLLECTING ENGLISH MAGIC

Materiality, Modernity, Museums

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ABSTRACT

Collecting English Magic: Materiality, Modernity, Museums

This study focuses on the collection and interpretation of English material magic by English museums in the modern era. Based on a survey of English amulets in English museums, the thesis addresses the question 'how have museum collections of English popular magic materialised relations between people and things in practice?' Melding two academic perspectives — historical interpretations of English magic and analyses of ethnographic collections — it contributes to both fields of study. Theoretical approaches from material culture studies, museology, anthropology and history are used. Building on four areas of current academic concern — magic, modernity, materiality and museums — the thesis explores four themes: changing attitudes to magic, shifting attitudes to the material world, the growth and definition of academic disciplines, and relationships between amateurism and professionalism. The thesis' temporal scope extends from 1850 to the present, with a focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when most of the collections were amassed, and on their re-interpretation in the second half of the twentieth century. Taking English amulets as its starting point, the thesis examines why and how these have been juxtaposed with artefacts from the rest of Britain, Europe and the world. It investigates networks of institutions, people, objects and ideas which formed and were formed by the collections. The study pivots around a number of key case studies, both of people who collected and interpreted amulets and of institutions that assembled them. Institutions encompass the Pitt Rivers Museum, Folklore Society, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Brighton Museum, and Museum of Witchcraft and Magic; individuals include General Pitt-Rivers, Edward Burnett Tylor, Frederick Elworthy, Edward Lovett, Henry Balfour, Alfred Cort Haddon, Herbert Toms, Beatrice Blackwood and Cecil Williamson. The thesis concludes that collections of English material magic have materialised relations between people and things in specific and significant ways.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my daughters: Juno, during the first seven years of whose life it was written, and Ruby, whose short life spurred me on to begin it.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. There are passages in the text that may closely resemble those in works previously published by the author, all of which are listed in the bibliography. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Tabitha Cadbury DATE: 1st April 2021

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE 1

Figure 2.1 a *Figure 2.1 b*

Figure 2.1 a

Belemnite or 'thunderbolt' said to guard against lightning, Toms collection, BMAG
BTNRPR.1951/2

Figure 2.1 b

'Hag stone' used as 'a charm against witchcraft', Clarke collection, SMT
SCARB 1946.307

Photographs by the author
1.1 a: courtesy of Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove
1.1 b: image from the Scarborough Collections courtesy of Scarborough Museums Trust

PLATE 2

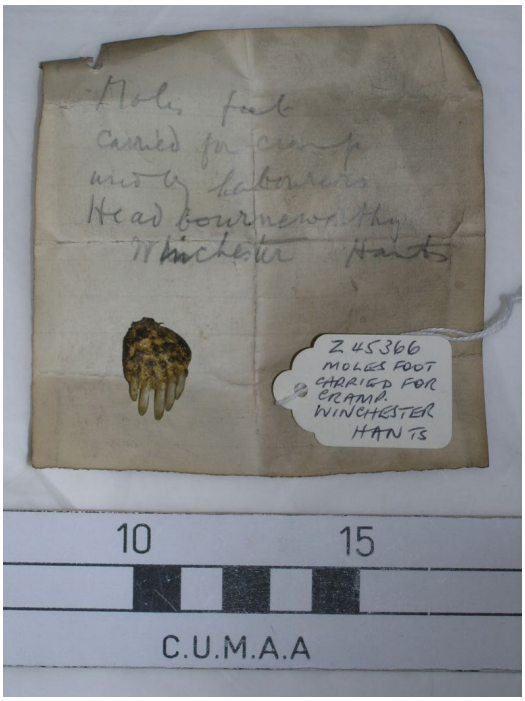

Figure 2.1 c *Figure 2.1 d*

Figure 2.1 c

Mole's foot 'carried for cramp', Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA Z45366

Figure 2.1 d
Mass-produced charm 'carried as an amulet to bring good luck', Clarke collection, SMT
SCARB 1946.48

Photographs by the author
2.1 c: courtesy of Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge
2.1 d: image from the Scarborough Collections courtesy of Scarborough Museums Trust

PLATE 3

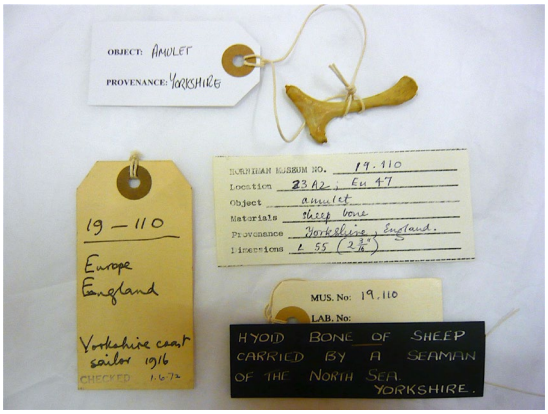

Figure 2.2 a

Figure 2.2 b

Figure 2.2 c

Figure 2.2 a
Sheep's tongue-bone 'carried by a seaman of the North Sea', Lovett collection, Horniman
LDHRN 1919.110

Figure 2.2 b
Screws re-purposed as amulets to 'promote fecundity' and 'bring good luck', Clarke collection, SMT
SCARB 1946.399 and 1946.400

Figure 2.2 c
Composite amulet 'hung on a stable door to keep witches away', Clarke collection, SMT
SCARB 1946.301

PLATE 4

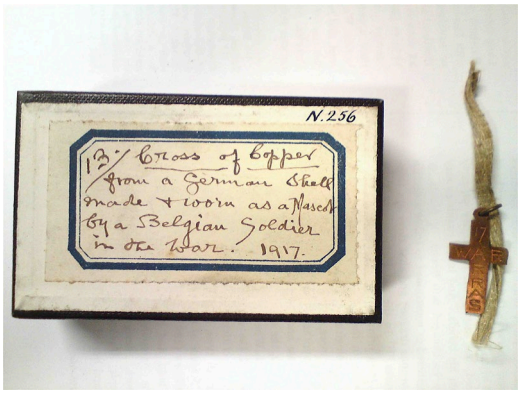

Figure 2.2 d

Figure 2.2 e

Figure 2.2 d
First World War Belgian soldier's amulet made 'from a German shell', Lovett collection, BCMAG
BC N.256

Figure 2.2 e
Mass produced ladybird brooch 'worn to bring good luck', Clarke collection, SMT
SCARB 1946.229

Photographs by the author
2.2 a: © Horniman Museum and Gardens
2.2 b, c: images from the Scarborough Collections courtesy of Scarborough Museums Trust.
2.2 d: courtesy of Bristol Culture
2.2 e: images from the Scarborough Collections courtesy of Scarborough Museums Trust.

PLATE 5

Figure 4.1 a

Figure 4.1 b

Figure 4.1 a
Densely packed 'magic and charms' display, PRM

Figure 4.1 b
Margaret Murray's 'silvered and stoppered bottle, said to contain a witch', on display at the PRM
PRM 1926.6.4

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

PLATE 6

Figure 4.2 a

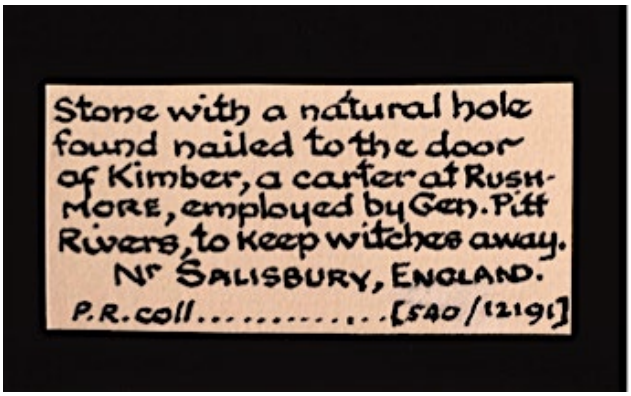

Figure 4.2 b

Figure 4.2 a-b
Holed stone 'found nailed to the door of Kimber, a carter at Rushmore', and its accompanying label, Pitt-Rivers collection, PRM
OXFPR 1884.56.3

PLATE 7

Figure 4.3 a

Figure 4.3 b

Figure 4.3 a-b
Drawers from card catalogues made during Balfour's curatorship (left) and during Blackwood and Penniman's (right), PRM

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

PLATE 8

Figure 5.1 a

Figure 5.1 b

Figure 5.1 a
The Folklore Cabinet, MAA

Figure 5.1 b
One of two drawers filled with English objects, Folklore Cabinet, MAA

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

PLATE 9

Figure 5.2

Figure 5.3

Figure 5.2
Holed stone amulet worn by 'W. Hockliffe, Mail-driver', Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA E1906.302

Figure 5.3
Catholic pilgrim's souvenir from Lourdes, Lovett collection, Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA Z45645

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

PLATE 10

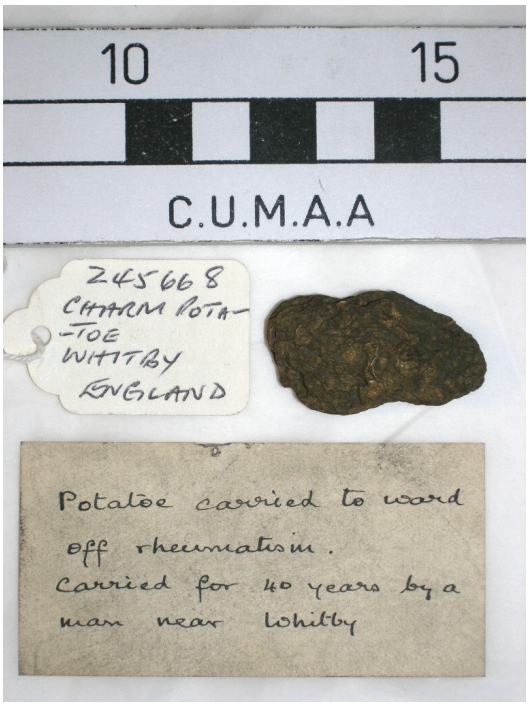

Figure 5.4 *Figure 5.5*

Figure 5.4
'Potatoe carried to ward off rheumatism', Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA Z45668

Figure 5.5
Albanian boars' tusk pendant 'given to W R[idgeway] by Miss [Edith] Durham', Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA 1927.974

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

PLATE 11

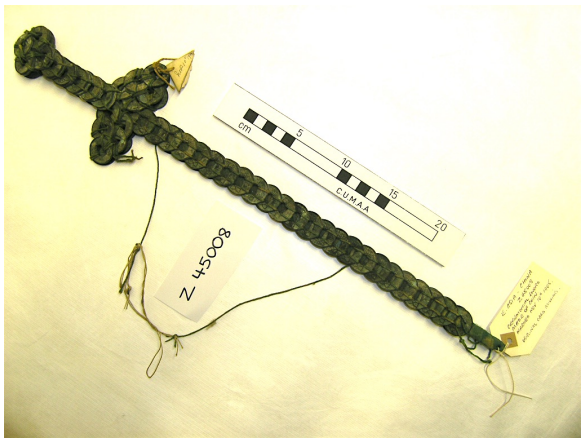

Figure 5.6 a

Figure 5.6 b

Figure 5.6 a
'Mediterranean charms against the evil eye', Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA Z45011A-M

Figure 5.6 b
'Queer currencies from Africa, China or Borneo': Chinese coin-sword said to protect against negative influences, Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA Z45008

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

PLATE 12

Figure 5.6 c

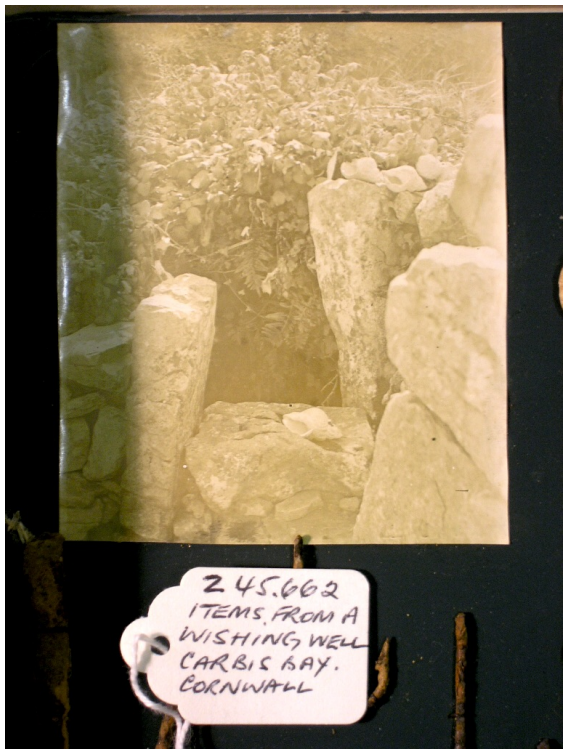

Figure 5.6 d

Figure 5.6 c-d
Bent pins from a Cornish 'wishing well', together with a photograph of the well, Folklore Cabinet, MAA
CAMAA Z45662

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

PLATE 13

Figure 7.1

Figure 7.1
Motor-car amulet designed and marketed by Lovett, Cuming Museum
LDCUM 1916.001.115A

Photograph by the author
Courtesy and copyright Cuming Museum, Southwark

PLATE 14

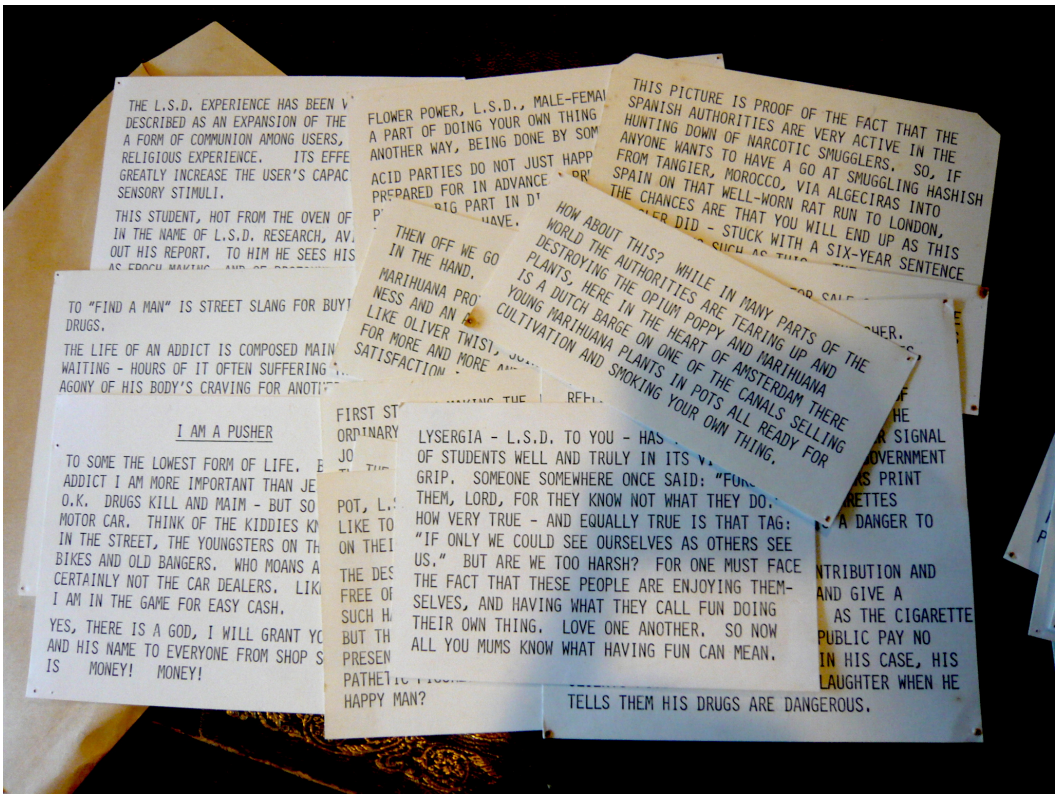

Figure 8.1

Figure 8.1

Williamson's labels for an exhibition about recreational drugs indicate that he consciously engaged with post-war 'counterculture', MWM

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 15

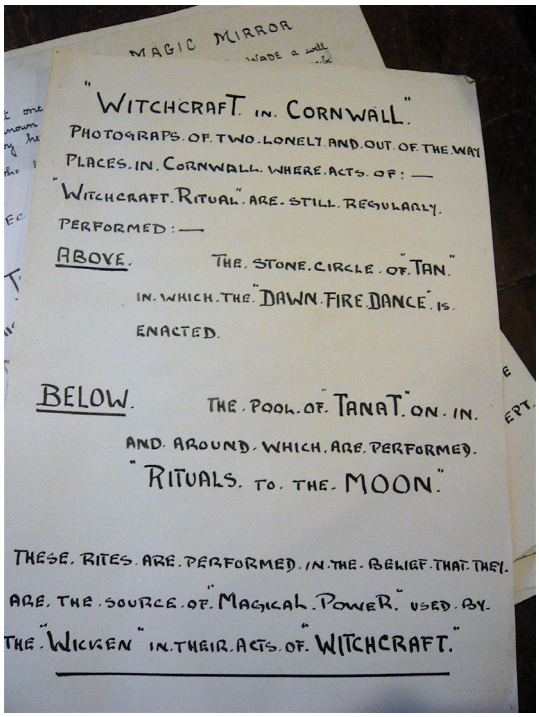

Figure 8.2 *Figure 8.3*

Figure 8.2
Rituals described in this draft exhibition text by Williamson sound more akin to modern Wicca than to traditional 'witchcraft in Cornwall', MWM

Figure 8.3
Modern ritual witchcraft paraphernalia displayed under the headline 'and it still goes on today', MWM

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 16

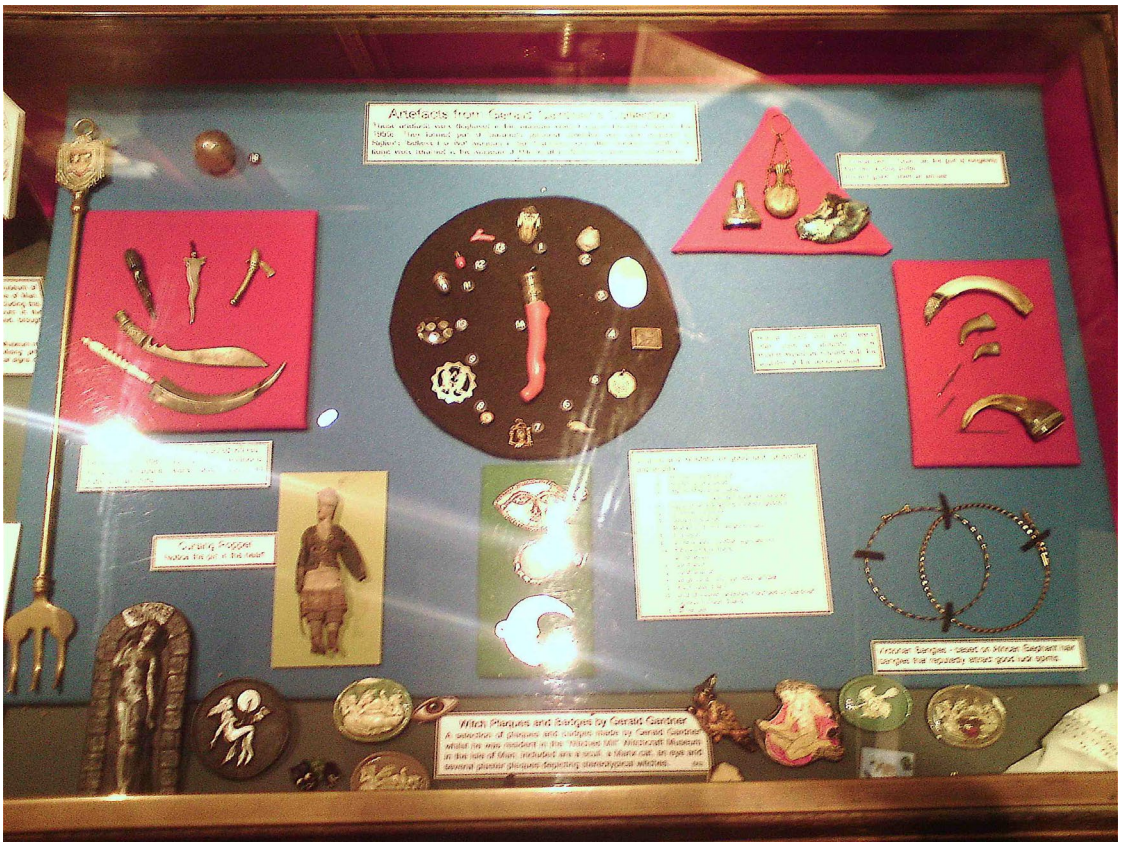

Figure 8.4

Figure 8.4
Gardner's collection, including traditional Mediterranean charms (centre), on display at the MWM

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Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 17

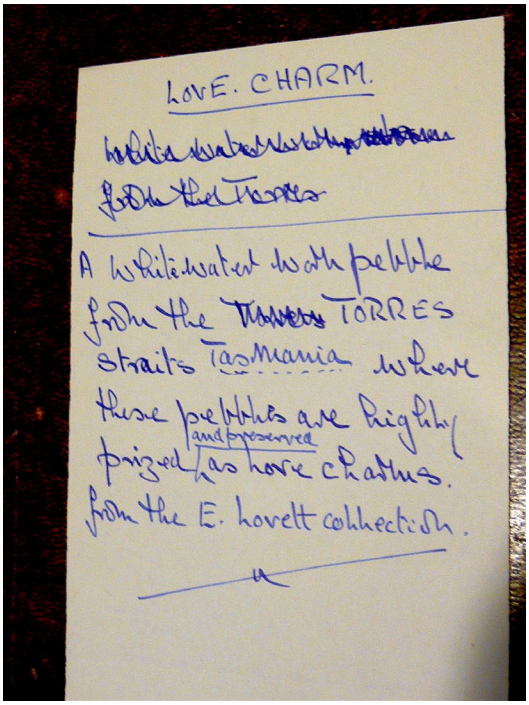


Figure 8.5

Figure 8.6

Figure 8.5
Williamson's label for a love charm 'from the E. Lovett collection' is inaccurately labelled 'from the Torres Straits Tasmania', MWM

Figure 8.6
Williamson's label for this holed stone, said to be 'used in weather-making magic', gives a level of detail not found in any other museum collection, MWM

Photograph by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 18

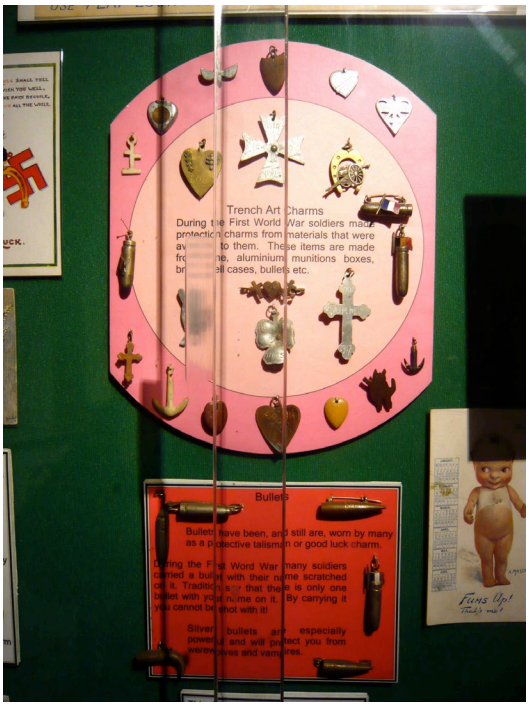


Figure 8.7

Figure 8.8

Figure 8.7
Soldiers' charms typical of those collected by Lovett, on display at the MWM

Figure 8.8
Fishing net float with an inset coin, similar to an example at the MAA but with much more elaborate information, MWM
MWM 300

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 19

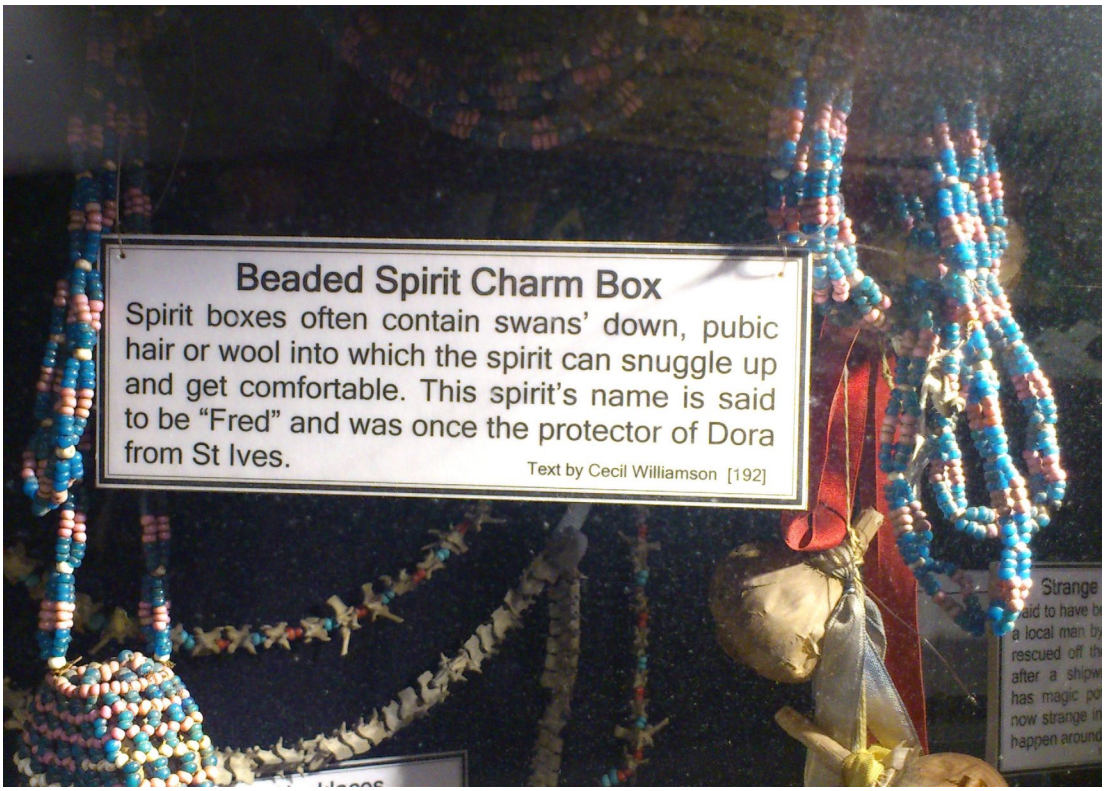


Figure 8.9

Figure 8.9
'Beaded Spirit Charm Box' with an extraordinarily detailed label, MWM
MWM 1927.12

Photograph by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 20

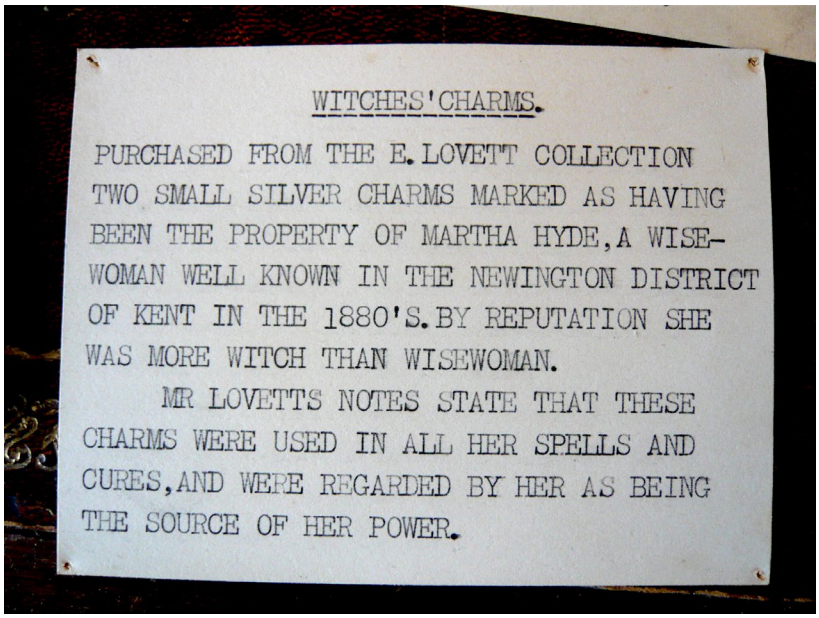


Figure 8.10

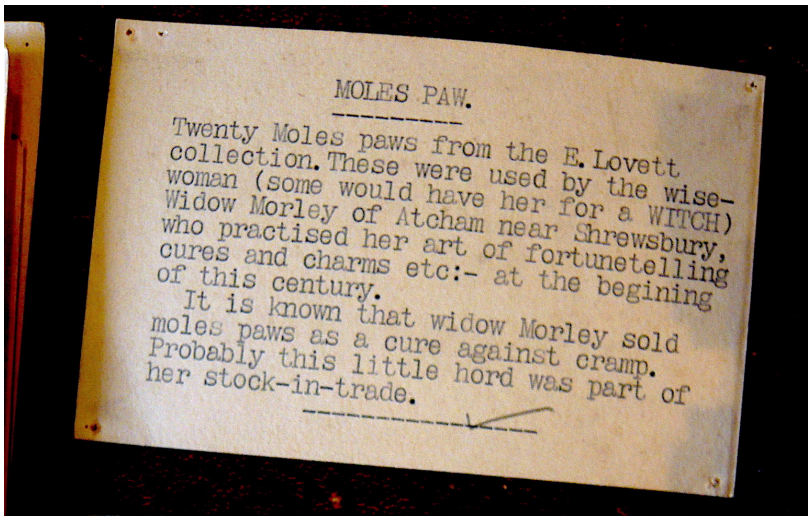


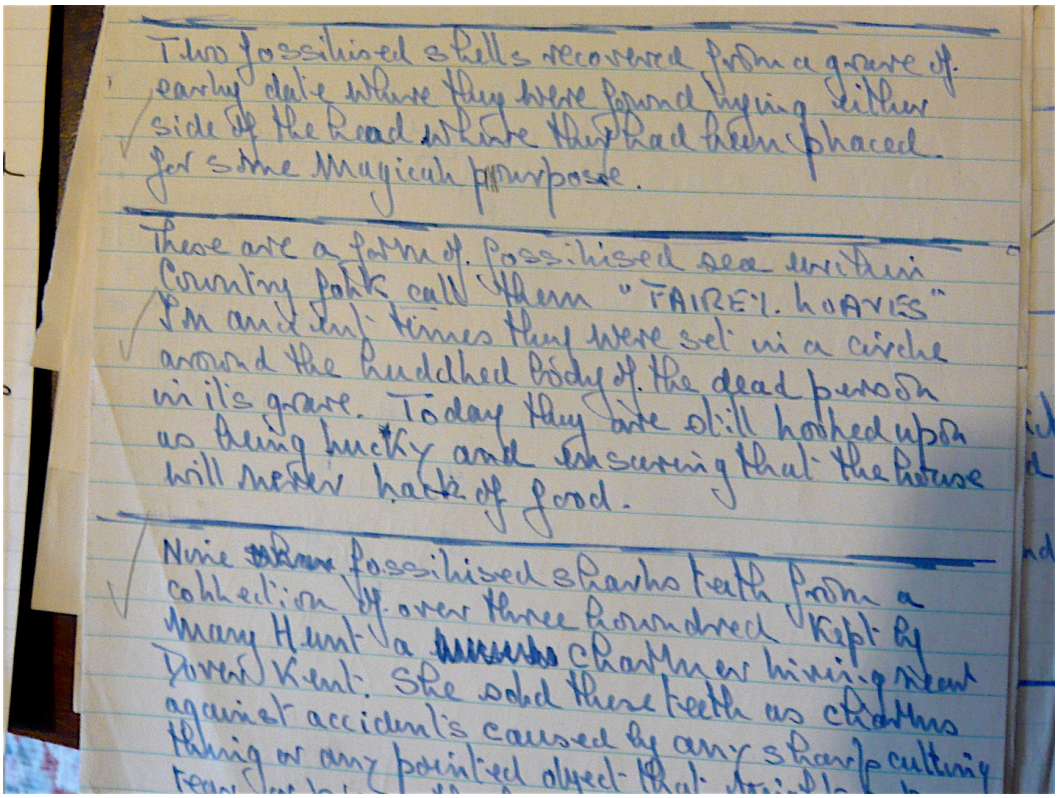
Figure 8.11

Figure 8.10
Williamson's label for 'Witches [*sic*] charms', implying that the original user 'was more witch than wisewoman', MWM

Figure 8.11
Williamson's label for 'twenty moles paws from the E. Lovett collection', insinuating of their original user that 'some would have her for a witch', MWM

Photograph by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 21


Two fossilised shells recovered from a grave of early date where they were found lying either side of the head where they had been placed for some magical purpose.

These are a form of fossilised sea urchin Country folk call them "FAIREY LOAVES" for ancient times they were set in a circle around the huddled body of the dead person in it's grave. Today they are still looked upon as being lucky and ensuring that the house will never have ~~a~~ of food.

Nine fossilised sharks teeth from a collection of over three hundred. Kept by many Hunt a ~~~~ Charmer living near Dover Kent. She said these teeth as charms against accidents caused by any sharp cutting thing or any pointed object that

Figure 8.12

Figure 8.12
Williamson's notes on 'Fairey Loaves' give familiar information about fossilised sea urchins, MWM

Photograph by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 22

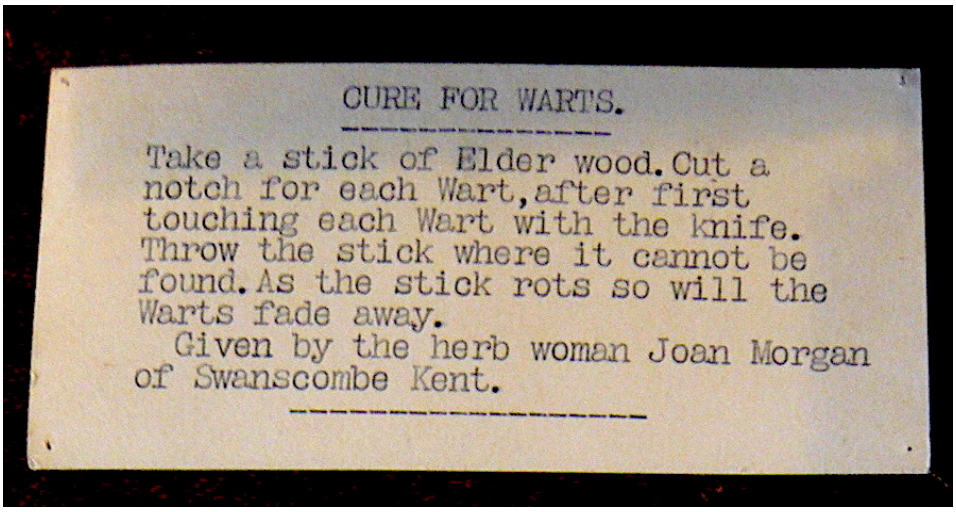


Figure 8.13 a

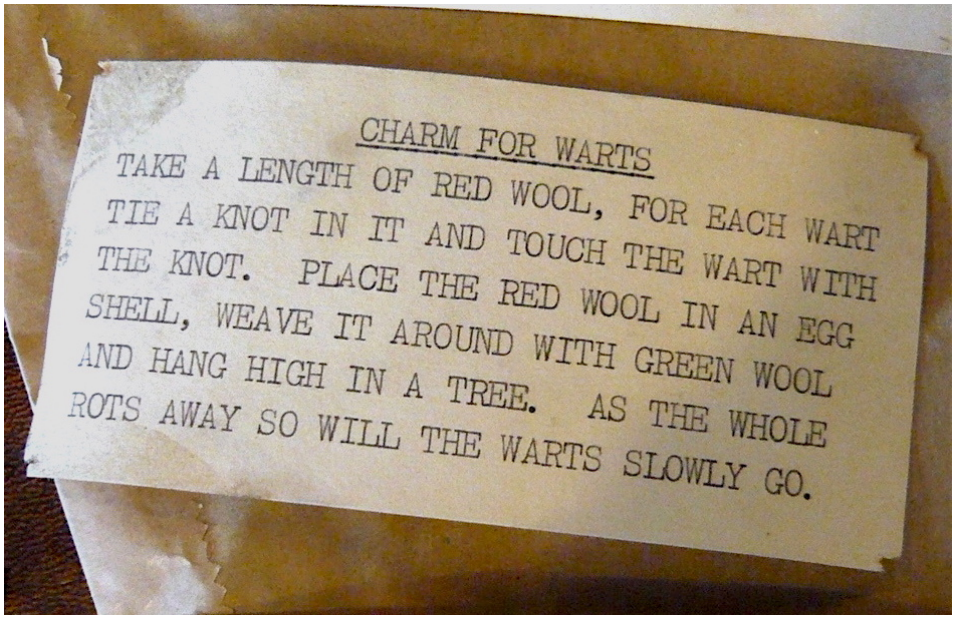


Figure 8.13 b

Figure 8.13 a-b
Williamson's labels for charms against warts: typical folk magic (top) and an unusually detailed description of ritual actions (bottom), MWM

Photographs by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 23

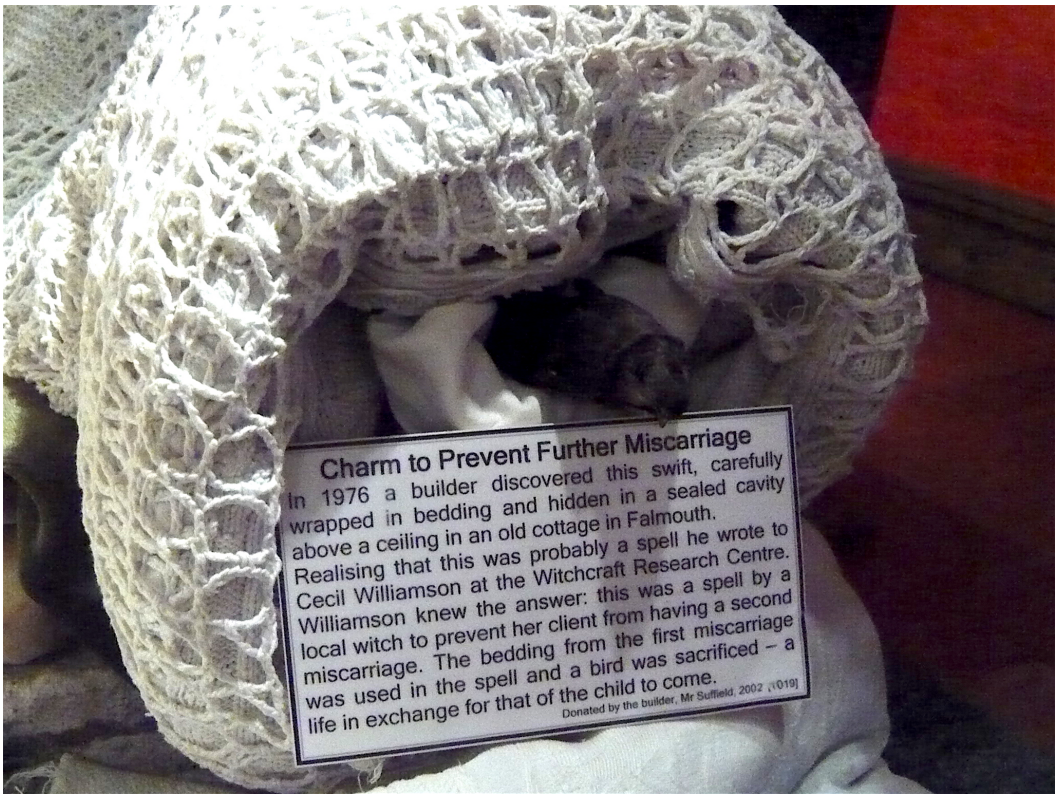


Figure 8.14

Figure 8.14
'Charm to Prevent Further Miscarriage', a bird's body wrapped in a blanket, MWM
MWM 1019

Photograph by the author
Courtesy of The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic

PLATE 24

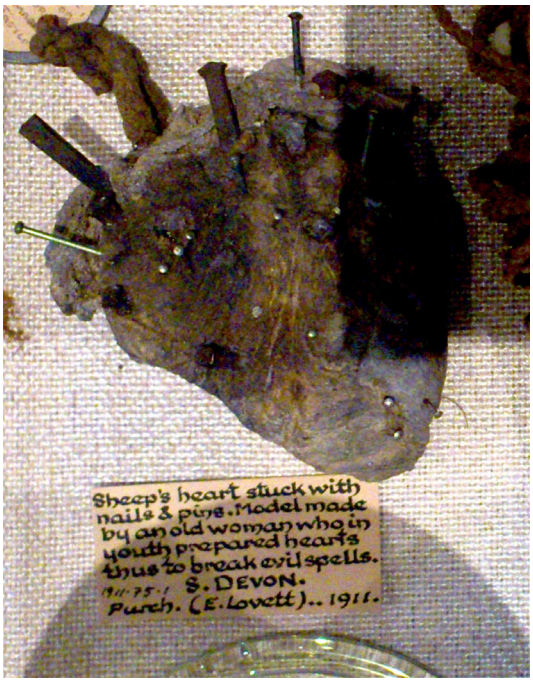


Figure 8.15

Figure 8.16

Figure 8.15
Sheep's heart pierced with pins, replica made from memory of a type formerly used 'to break evil spells', Lovett collection, PRM
OXFPR 1911.75.1

Figure 8.16
Sprig of moonwort labelled '16th century', said to have been 'carried to make the bearer invisible', Clarke collection, SMT
SCARB 1946.135

Photographs by the author
8.14: Courtesy of Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford
8.15: Image from the Scarborough Collections courtesy of Scarborough Museums Trust

CHAPTER 1. Scope and structure of thesis

This thesis explores museum collections of modern-era English folk magic, examining the historical and intellectual contexts in which English amulets have been amassed and interpreted. In doing so, it makes an original contribution to my own profession, that of museology and curatorial practice. Its intended impact is to provide a firm foundation for people managing and interpreting such collections, allowing such objects to be represented with greater integrity by museums. The thesis is situated at a crossroads between two academic conversations, the history of ethnographic collections in museums and the history of English magic. Positioned in relation to studies of material culture and museums which have flourished since the 1980s, it contributes to a twenty-first century resurgence of academic and popular interest in relationships between magical thinking and modernity. In doing so, it sheds light on changing attitudes to magic and the material world which have occurred in British intellectual culture since these objects first entered museums in the mid-nineteenth century. Interest in material evidence for magic has burgeoned over the past decade, with three edited volumes on the subject published in 2015 alone, and with major exhibitions on the theme at the British Library, the Ashmolean, the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and elsewhere. Although objects of modern-era English folk magic were touched upon in these exhibitions and publications, there has been no in-depth study of how, when and why this significant category of objects has been defined and gathered by museums. The thesis sets out to fill this gap.

Anthropologists Joshua Bell and Haidy Geismar have stated that 'materialisation [is] a consolidation of the relations between people and things in practice'.[1] Referring to colonial encounters in Oceania, they posit that artefacts in museums are 'materialisations of these encounters and in their organisation materialised ways of evaluating and knowing' the peoples of their area of study.[2] The present study considers collections of English amulets in a similar light, asking how discernible patterns in their collection, circulation and interpretation have materialised ways of knowing and evaluating people in England. Taking the statement above as inspiration, the key question addressed by the thesis is 'how have museum collections of modern English magic materialised relations between people and things in practice?'

Working towards this thesis has enabled me to investigate a number of tightly entangled areas of concern, namely museums and materiality, magic and modernity. This pursuit has necessitated the investigation of several sub-questions: how do museum collections relate to the growth and definition of academic disciplines, in particular anthropology and folklore? Why and how have intellectual attitudes to the material world and to magic shifted in England? How have relationships changed between amateur and academic understandings of these? How have these changing relationships been materialised in museum collections? Using case studies, I address these questions by investigating relationships between people (collectors), things (English amulets), institutions (museums) and ideas (magic) in modern England.

[1] J. A. Bell and H. Geismar, 'Materialising Oceania: New ethnographies of things in Melanesia and Polynesia', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (Vol. 20, No. 1, 2009), 4.
[2] Bell and Geismar, 'Materialising Oceania', 8.

1.1. Academic context

Despite burgeoning interest in the history of museums, the place of English folk magic within them has not been specifically addressed. There are several reasons to re-visit this situation. Firstly, museums occupy a significant place in the history of 'Western thought' and within this, magical objects hold a key position because of their liminal position between material and immaterial worlds, and their place in academic debates about rational and magical thinking. To the people who collected and curated amulets in the second half of the nineteenth century, these objects were opposed to both scientific rationality and to the 'rational' Protestantism to which the collectors (at least nominally) subscribed. Secondly, twenty-first century academic assessments of museums use the concept of 'magic' in a broader sense, implying that museums themselves are 'ritual sites' and that therefore objects situated within them have enhanced 'charisma'. Thirdly, museums perform a kind of 'alchemy' by making decisions about who is represented by whom, adding to our understanding of how different groups within society have transformed and comprehended each other.

Relationships between magic and modernity are continuing topics of interest in academia, museums, art and popular culture. The theme of material magic itself has recently attracted considerable academic interest, with three edited volumes on the subject published in 2015. Papers in Ceri Houlbrook and Natalie Armitage's *The Materiality of Magic* discuss the significance of material culture in

relation to magic worldwide.[3] Papers in Ronald Hutton's *Physical Evidence for Ritual Acts, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Christian Britain* (including my own chapter, *Amulets: the material evidence*) provide an overview of existing physical remains of 'magic and related ritual practices' specific to Christian Britain.[4] Contributors to Deitrich Boschung and Jan Bremmer's edited volume, *The Materiality of Magic*, focus on material magic in the ancient world.[5] In *Magic: a Very Short Introduction*, the historian Owen Davies briefly touches on the material culture of magic, referring to 'concealed objects', 'fetishes', 'witch-bottles' and 'thunderstones'.[6] While Davies has looked more closely at the practices of professional or semi-professional cunning-folk and charmers than at self-administered folk-magic, Hutton has examined the development of more formalised belief systems, including modern witchcraft, that have also been inspired by folk magic.[7] Written charms and literary magic have received recent attention, notably from folklorist Jonathan Roper and from Davies.[8]

English magic has also been the subject of a number of recent exhibitions, including the Clarke collection of charms and amulets in *Fears, Foes and Fairies* at the Scarborough Museum and Art Gallery (2011), the PRM's Lovett collection in *Charmed Life* at the Wellcome Collection (2011), and items of folk magic posing

[3] C. Houlbrook and N. Armitage (eds.), *The Materiality of Magic: An artifactual investigation into ritual practices and popular beliefs* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015).
[4] R. Hutton (ed.), *Physical Evidence for Ritual Acts, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Christian Britain: A Feeling for Magic*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 3.
[5] D. Boschung and J. N. Bremmer, *The Materiality of Magic* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink: 2015).
[6] O. Davies, *Magic: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 95-98.
[7] O. Davies, *Cunning Folk: popular magic in English history* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003); R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and other works.
[8] J. Roper, *English Verbal Charms* (Helsinki: Tiedeakatemia, 2005) and (ed.), *Charms, Charmers and Charming: international research on verbal magic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); O. Davies, *Grimoires: a history of magic books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

as witchcraft in a Pendle witch trials quatercentenary exhibition in Lancaster (2012). *The Dark Monarch* exhibition at the Tate St Ives (2009-2010) re-evaluated the undercurrent of magic in twentieth century 'modern' art, while the artist Jeremy Deller's exhibition *English Magic*, launched at the Venice Biennale in 2013, focused on 'British society — its people, its icons, myths, folklore and its cultural identity and political history'.[9] That the artist Simon Costin's Museum of British Folklore has incorporated the former Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle, rebranding it as The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic (MWM), is indicative of the mainstream art world's appropriation or acceptance of 'folklore' and 'folk art' and the postmodern appeal of material magic. Institutional interest culminated with two major exhibitions in 2018, the British Library's *Harry Potter: a History of Magic* and *Spellbound* at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in Oxford. In 2019-20, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery's staged its exhibition *Magic* with the tagline 'Do you believe in magic?', calling into question visitors' own attitudes to magic.[10] None of these exhibitions, however, examined in detail the category of English magical objects which are most commonly found in museum collections: the popular charms and amulets amassed by antiquarians, folklorists and anthropologists as the British Empire peaked in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Despite ebbs and flows in academic interest, less formal fascination with charms and amulets has not ceased since collecting peaked. Discussions continue in the Folklore Society's newsletter, while recent compilations and analyses have been

[9] British Council, 'UK at the Venice Biennale', *venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/history/2010s/2013-jeremy-deller* (British Council, 2019), accessed 5 Jun. 2019.
[10] Bristol Museums, *bristolmuseums.org.uk/tag/magic/*, accessed 3 May 2020.

written concerning particular types of material and immaterial charms.[11] Fossils, stones and objects found deliberately concealed in the fabric of post-medieval buildings have caught the attention of recent researchers.[12] Several writers have looked at particular groups of objects, including Jude Hill on Edward Lovett's charms in the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum (WHMM, now the Wellcome Collection, London) and Nicholas Saunders on the 'trench art' charms made by First World War soldiers.[13] Geologists Christopher Duffin, Jane Davidson and palaeontologist Kenneth McNamara have written about fossils said to have magical properties.[14] Again, none of these investigate the contexts in which these objects were collected, in some cases leading to misinterpretation of the material. The thesis looks into the reasons for this revival and explains why it is important to consider the history of collecting in future interpretations of this particular category of artefacts.

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[11] For example G. Hatfield, *Warts: summary of wart-cure survey for the Folklore Society* (London: The Folklore Society, 1998); A. Chumbley, *The Leaper Between: a historical study of the toad-bone amulet; its form, function and practice in popular magic* (California: Three Hands Press, 2012).

[12] In addition, contemporary collector Sheila Paine's highly illustrated *Amulets: A World of Secret Powers, Charms and Magic* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004) compares the use and significance of amulets around the world today, while further treatises on immaterial magic have relevance to material charms, including Alan Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook* (New York: Garland, 1981).

[13] N. J. R. Saunders, *Trench Art: materialities and memories of war* (London: Berg, 2003); J. Hill, 'The Story of the Amulet: Locating the Enchantment of Collections', *Journal of Material Culture* 12:1 (2007), 65-87. 'Trench art' is the definition given by writers and collectors to objects made from found materials by military personnel during times of conflict, especially the two world wars. It has been the subject of several recent books including N. J. R. Saunders and M. J. R. Dennis, *Craft and Conflict: masonic trench art and military memorabilia* (London: Savannah Publications, 2003); J. A. Kimball, *Trench Art: an illustrated history* (Davis, California: Silverpenny Press, 2004; N. J. R. Saunders and P. Cornish, *Contested Objects Objects: material memories of the Great War* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[14] C. Duffin, 'Herbert Toms (1874-1940), Witch Stones and Porosphaera Beads', *Folklore* 122 (2011), 84-101; C. Duffin and J. Davidson, 'Geology and the Dark Side', *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association* (Vol. 122, 2011), 7–15; K. J. McNamara, *The Star-Crossed Stone: The secret life, myths, and history of a fascinating fossil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011)

1.2. Professional context

The question 'what brought me to this subject?' is a complex one. My work is inevitably coloured by my own experience as a student and museum professional at a number of institutions, as well as my personal interests and family background.[15] My professional involvement with 'ethnography' or 'world cultures' collections began in the 1990s when I studied social anthropology, volunteered in museums, trained in curatorship and found employment documenting photographic archives at the Museum of Mankind in London, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) in Cambridge and elsewhere. Like most anthropology students, I chose the field with liberal humanist intentions, but we were soon trained to be ethically uncomfortable with our subject matter. As the historian of anthropology James Clifford commented in 1981, 'in its own eyes, Western humanism is the love of humanity, but to others it is merely the custom and institution of a group of men [*sic*], their password and sometimes their battle cry'.[16] In the 2000s I found longer-term employment as a curatorial assistant at the MAA and volunteered for the Museum

[15] On graduating in 1992 with my first degree in Archaeology and Anthropology (specialising in Social Anthropology) from the University of Cambridge, I began volunteering at the MAA. After graduating in 1995 with an MA in the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas from the University of East Anglia (UEA), I found work documenting photographic collections, gaining hands-on understanding of the many ways in which museums classify and catalogue their collections and how these have changed over time. I became acutely aware of the subjective and arbitrary nature of classification systems, dependent as they are on the perspectives of the people who input the data and standardise the terminology used. Determined to move from documentation into interpretation, I graduated in 2002 with a vocational Diploma in Heritage Management from Nottingham Trent University, in the same year qualifying as an Associate Member of the Museums Association (AMA). From 2000 until 2006 I was employed as a Curatorial Assistant at the MAA, initially on a Designation Challenge Fund (DCF) project to reorganise the museum's stored anthropology collections. Since 2007, I have worked as Curator of Social History and World Cultures at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery (now The Box, Plymouth). I have previously conducted collections-based research on modern Greek, Amazonian, Congolese and New Guinean collections.

[16] J. Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Surrealism', *Comparative Studies in Science and History* (Vol. 23, No. 4, Oct. 1981), 562.

Ethnographers Group (MEG) as honorary secretary. At the MAA I encountered the museum's apparently marginalised 'folklore collection', including the 'Folklore Cabinet' containing the English charms and amulets which provided the starting point for this study. My work brought me into close contact with the contested histories of collections, and it seemed to me instructive to consider how my own cultural ancestors, in comparison to those of others, had been collected and interpreted.

The thesis was inspired by research undertaken by colleagues amongst whom I have worked, in particular those who have analysed patterns of collecting as indicative of relationships between objects, people, institutions and ideas involved in colonial or inter-cultural encounters. Sarah Byrne's work on the Horniman Museum ('the Horniman'), Francis Larson's on the Wellcome Collection and Claire Wintle's on the curator Herbert Toms' collections at the Brighton Museum have particularly inspired me by the ways in which they use close studies of museum collections to draw broader conclusions about material and social relationships in the past and their continuing effectiveness in the present.[17] Recent studies which have informed my approach, and to which mine is close in subject matter, include those exploring the Pitt Rivers Museum's collections, in particular the *Relational Museum* project with its associated book *Knowing Things*, and the *England: the Other Within* project with its related publications including those by Oliver Douglas and Chris Wingfield, especially

[17] S. Byrne, 'Trials and Traces: A.C. Haddon's Agency as Museum Curator', in S. Byrne *et. al.* (eds.), *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum* (New York: Springer, 2011), 307–325; F. Larson, *An Infinity of Things: How Sir Henry Wellcome Collected the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); C. Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with material culture in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013).

the former's doctoral thesis *The Material Culture of Folklore*.[18] Douglas adds a material dimension to Richard Dorson's history of folklore as a discipline, while Wingfield's papers delve into the complex biographies of individual objects with magical reputations, such as a supposed 'witch's ladder' collected by Tylor in Somerset, which has taken on new significance in Neo-Pagan realms exterior to academia.[19] Here, I build on their work by engaging with recent theoretical discussions concerning magic and materiality, in relation to the academic and museological materialisation and dematerialisation of English amulets in English museums.[20] The anthropologist and curator Alison Brown has commented that 'if we regard objects as documents in themselves, it is remarkable how much is revealed about collectors as individuals and about collecting as a cultural phenomenon'.[21] This thesis considers collections of English amulets as documents in themselves, asking what they reveal about their collectors and the historical contexts in which they were collected, as well as their continuing efficacy as agents of cultural change.

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[18] C. Gosden and F. Larson, *Knowing things: exploring the collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum, 1884-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); O.A. Douglas, *The Material Culture of Folklore: British ethnography collections between 1890 and 1900* (Doctoral thesis, University of Oxford: Linacre College, 2010). Wingfield's relevant publications include, 'Is the Heart at Home? E. B. Tylor's collections from Somerset, *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (Vol. 22, 2009), 22-38; 'A Case Re-opened: the science and folklore of a "Witch's Ladder"', *Journal of Material Culture* (Vol. 15, No. 3, 2010), 302-322; 'From Greater Britain to Little England: the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Museum of English Rural Life, and their six degrees of separation', *Museum History Journal* (Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011), 245-266.

[19] R. M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: a history* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1968); Wingfield, 'Witch's Ladder'.

[20] The materiality of religion is also a matter of current academic interest. See for example E. Arwick and W. Keenan (eds.), *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); C. Paine, *Religious Objects in Museums: Private Lives and Public Duties* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); papers in *Journal of Material Religion*.

[21] A. K. Brown, 'Collecting Material Folklore', *Folklore* (Vol. 109, 1998), 35.

In *Knowing Things*, their exploration of relationships between objects and people at the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) up until 1945, Chris Gosden and Francis Larson observe that 'you could start in the Museum with an object, a whole display case, or a person and follow a chain of connections that would eventually lead you almost anywhere in the world, past or present'.[22] Byrne *et. al.* take this suggestion forward in relation to the Horniman's ethnography collections, asserting that 'when you open the museum cabinets and unpack their collections, you find all sorts of links and connections that spread across time and space'.[23] Douglas explains that while working at the PRM, he became intrigued by displays on 'Sympathetic Magic' and 'Natural Objects and Stone Tools Used as Charms', many of which are British.[24] Similarly, my own 'research journey' began at the turn of the twenty-first century with the MAA's Folklore Cabinet.[25] Starting with the English amulets stored in one of the Cabinet's drawers, I followed a chain of connections revealing why, how, when and by whom they had been subsumed into anthropological collections encompassing the whole world. My intention here is to consider these patterns of collecting as indicative of relationships between the objects, people, institutions and ideas involved, in this instance, in intra- as well as inter-cultural colonial encounters.

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[22] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things,* 241.
[23] Byrne *et. al., Unpacking*, 15.
[24] Douglas, *Material Culture*, i.
[25] In my paper 'Home and Away: What was Folklore at Cambridge?', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (Vol. 22, 2009), 102-119, I contextualise the Cabinet within the MAA's folklore collections. My role in the DCF project was to improve documentation and storage of anthropological collections at the museum's external stores, which contained African, South American and European material. On of my team's first tasks was to move the Folklore Cabinet from a workroom on the museum's main site. I was struck by the Cabinet's apparent downward trajectory, during which it was removed prior to a major gallery redisplay in 1992 and relegated to the external stores eight years later. Photographs taken at the time of the redisplay show the Cabinet in the main anthropology gallery (private collection). I first encountered the Cabinet 'in person' in 1992, while volunteering behind the scenes at the MAA.

This thesis began as an attempt to rehabilitate English amulets as objects of study by examining them in the light of twenty-first century analytical concerns. Such collections provide an example of how English culture and identity has been tightly bound to its relationships with both its 'Celtic' neighbours and its colonies worldwide.[26] While folklore and magic have played more explicit roles in identity formation for the 'Celtic' nations of the British Isles and Ireland,[27] my study focuses on English amulets as archetypical examples of things both material and magical within a society (England) often stereotyped as both cerebral and rational.[28] This perception is belied by England's involvement in what are commonly known as the first and second 'folk revivals', with their differing perceptions of the place of magic within English culture. The first and second folk revivals are typically defined, respectively, as that which peaked between the mid-nineteenth century and the First World War, and that which formed part of the counterculture which flourished after the Second World War.[29] The first folk revival is widely characterised as having had a basis in primary field collecting, and the second in re-interpretation of material gathered in the first. Roper, noting that 'a tradition of complaint about the lack of attention

[26] E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), both published in the same year, point out the importance of shared interpretations of history in the cohesion of nation-states.

[27] I have used the term 'British Isles and Ireland' when referring to time-periods extending beyond the secession of Ireland from the United Kingdom in 1923. From 1801 until 1922, Ireland was officially, politically and contentiously part of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland'. Throughout the thesis, therefore, where I am essentially referring to the time-period before 1923, and in common with several authors whom I quote, I use the term 'British Isles'.

[28] This observation comes from my own personal experience as a person of mixed Scottish and Cornish/English descent, born and brought up in Wales. One only has to think of Walter Scott, the annual Eisteddfod, W.B. Yeats and Ralph Vaughan Williams to understand that the romanticisation of folk traditions has been an important part of national identity formation in all of the nations of the British Isles and Ireland, but with different emphases and different timescales for each.

[29] Hutton, *Moon*, 283-84, considers the 'second great wave of interest in folk-lore and folk-culture' in the 1960s and 1970s.

paid to English vernacular culture and folklore' goes right back to the antiquarian William Thoms, argues that 'England was not the land without folklore, it was the land that lacked folklorists'.[30] Thoms, known for coining the term 'folk-lore' in 1849, lamented the absence of a work on English folklore comparable to Grimms' Fairy Tales, first published in 1812.[31]

The first folk revival in England is said to have been fuelled by two contemporary ideological approaches — nationalism and evolutionism. Collecting English material magic was part of an international movement encompassing the salvage of folk music, folktales and other forms of folklore as well as artefacts in the face of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. In their studies of English musical identity between 1880 and the Second World War, the music historian Fiona Richards and ethnomusicologist Martin Clayton explain that folklore collecting accompanied the formation of nation states and concomitant rise of nationalism in Continental Europe, but that England became involved in the movement at a comparatively late stage. Britain's empire meant that unlike newly formed or colonised nations, England felt less need to define or defend its identity.[32] In forming their sense of identity, however, upper- and middle-class collectors of English amulets looked not 'inward' to themselves but 'outward' towards the

[30] J. Roper, 'England: the Land without Folklore?' in T. Baycroft and D. Hopkin (eds.), *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2012), 227 and abstract.

[31] Roper, 'England', citing Thoms, *Lays and Legends of Various Countries: Germany* (London: G. Cowie, 1934), viii, which in turn refers to J. and W. Grimm„*Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales), Vol. 1, 1812; Vol. 2, 1814 (pre-dated 1815). Thoms also established the journal *Notes and Queries* in 1849 and later had a key role in establishing the Folk-Lore Society. Inspired by the Brothers Grimm, Roper explains, he also planned a book on *The Folk-Lore of England* which never came to fruition and which, Roper opines, is likely to have had a strong supernatural bias. See J. Roper, 'Thoms and the Unachieved "Folk-Lore of England", *Folklore* (Vol. 118, No. 2, Jun. 2007), 203-216.

[32] F. Richards and M. Clayton, 'Introduction' in *English Musical Identity, c. 1880-1939* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2002).

folklore of lower classes within their own society as well as indigenous people in Britain's colonies. Although, unlike other European countries, England did not develop its own folk museum or university department of folklore during the first folk revival, examples of English vernacular culture can be found within world-encompassing anthropology collections developed at this time. The thesis examines this pattern and considers its causes and consequences.

Clearly, mass collecting of English amulets sat firmly within the age of 'imperial folklore' as defined by Wingfield and Gosden who, discussing differences between national, colonial and imperial folklore, argue that folklore in England was transformed during the second half of the nineteenth century from 'an established romantic and essentially nationalist endeavour, into one that utilised the global vision provided by empire'.[33] My survey demonstrates that English and international amulets were institutionalised in tandem by museums as the British Empire peaked. In this context, amulets collected by antiquarians for nostalgic and romantic reasons were subsumed into the global visions of cultural evolutionists. During the first folk revival, rather than serving primarily as exemplars in the service of romantic nationalism, English amulets were strategically juxtaposed with objects from elsewhere in the British Isles, Europe and the rest of the world in the service of evolutionary theory.

Collections of English amulets, then, allow us to consider how and why theoreticians and curators with progressive, liberal intentions, such as General

[33] C. Wingfield and C. Gosden, 'An Imperialist Folklore? Establishing the Folk-Lore Society in London', in Baycroft and Hopkin (eds.), *Folklore and Nationalism*, 257-260. This paper explores connections between the FLS, the AI and the PRM.

Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900), Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941), Alfred Cort Haddon (1855-1940) and Henry Balfour (1863-1939), compared British people from lower classes with colonial subjects they perceived as 'primitive' in the context of cultural evolutionary theories. In doing so, explains Roper, they took forward an intellectual trajectory pursued by Thoms who, following the Brothers Grimm, 'saw recent and contemporary folklore as the fragments of partly lost, partly retrievable pre-Christian practice and belief'.[34] Clayton discusses 'the ways the relationships between the centre and its others were imagined, whether by the latter we mean the English "peasants" or the Empire's "natives"'.[35] Wingfield, in his study of the PRM's English collections, argues that the 'civilization' represented in Victorian English museums 'might exclude certain periods of the British past just as easily as it excluded people from remote parts of Britain's empire and even certain residents of the British Isles, such as the rural and urban working classes'.[36] Wingfield warns, though, against making a simple comparison between the 'folk' at home and 'natives' or 'indigenes' abroad, pointing out that boundaries between collectors and the people from whom they collect are far more blurred in a 'home' situation despite class differences, asking 'would an English dealer buying an English item at an English market stall, then selling it to the Pitt Rivers Museum be a secondary collector, a field collector or

[34] Roper, 'England', abstract.
[35] Clayton, M., 'Musical renaissance and its margins in England and India, 1874-1914', in *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s to 1940s: portrayal of the East* (Aldershot: Ashgate), 72.
[36] C. Wingfield, 'Placing Britain in the British Museum: encompassing the other', in S. Knell (ed.), *National Museums* (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.

even a primary field source?'[37] In an English setting the borderlines between these groups are permeable, they influence each other, and individuals move between them. The 'folk' of England have been part of a literate society for centuries despite nineteenth-century folklorists' desire to find pure, ancient, oral traditions.[38]

I chose folklore collections as a research subject partly because they seemed to be academically unfashionable at the institution where I worked. I wanted to find out why this was the case, taking it to be symptomatic of their relationship with academia. Having been perhaps over-interpreted by early anthropologists they appeared to have fallen out of favour; having become associated with outmoded nationalist and evolutionary theories developed in colonial contexts, they were viewed with some suspicion. The reasons that these objects have been collected (or not collected), the ways in which they have been interpreted (or not interpreted), and the significances that have been attributed to them, are deeply embedded in the broader, deeper history of England and beyond, therefore a study of the collections can contribute towards illuminating this history.[39]

[37] C. Wingfield, 'Donors, Loaners, Dealers and Swappers: The Relationships Behind the English Collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum', in Byrne *et. al.*, *Unpacking*, 124.
[38] Ronald Hutton and Owen Davies both explore this line of thought in various of their works.
[39] See M. Bille *et. al.* (eds.), *An Anthropology of Absence: materializations of transcendence and loss* (New York: Springer, 2010), on the importance of paying attention to what is missing as well as present.

1.3. Methodology and sources

The process of research itself has been described as consisting of three basic elements: data collection, analysis and theorising.[40] Of the many avenues I could have pursued, I chose to focus on one particular sort of collection: that which was self-consciously formed with 'magic' or associated concepts in mind.[41] Primary sources consulted, in addition to the objects themselves, took the form of words written on objects, labels attached to or accompanying them, display texts, accession registers, catalogue cards and databases, collectors' correspondence and archival material, photographs and institutional reports. Published sources consulted include books and papers which were cited by, written by and inspired by the collectors, as well as more general historical and theoretical works. Underlying the thesis is a survey of modern English amulets in English museums, taking inspiration from Roper's work on verbal charms and further explored in Chapter 2.[42] Most of the data on which the thesis is based was accumulated between 2007 and 2013, during which time I created an Excel spreadsheet of English amulets in museums, adding records from different

[40] I have come across this claim in two very different publications, separated by more than a century: H. Balfour, *The Evolution of Decorative Art: An essay upon its origin and development as illustrated by the art of modern races of mankind* (New York: MacMillan, 1893) and J. V. Pickstone, *Ways of Knowing: a new history of science, technology and medicine*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2000.

[41] I opted to begin my study at the point when English folk magic first entered museums in any quantity, under the auspices of Pitt-Rivers. Avenues of research which have not been explored in detail on this occasion include: how these objects were collected and studied by antiquarians before they entered museums; isolated objects of English magic that entered museums before the mid-nineteenth century; magical material other than amulets (divination, high magic, curses); deliberately concealed objects (found without documentation); English magic in photographic collections; amulets in costume, jewellery and other settings; interactions between collectors and the objects' original makers and users; comparisons between the collection and interpretation of amulets in England and the 'Celtic' nations of the British Isles and in other European countries.

[42] Roper (ed.), *Verbal Charms*.

institutions as I collected them.[43] The fields used in my spreadsheet were initially based on those of the MAA, the first relevant collection I studied. The spreadsheet was later adapted to accommodate data on similar material from other institutions. The fields finally used are listed in Table 1, together with notes on how I used them. For some fields (such as acquisition date, source name and provenance), terminology was standardised so that data could be sorted. Other fields are free-text so required more subjective analysis.

I began my research by examining the objects in the MAA's Folklore Cabinet, together with any accompanying documentation. I examined the objects and updated database records for this collection in 2003-2004, while I was employed at the museum. My statistical analysis of the collection is based on a 2007 database export. I then searched for published material directly referencing the objects in the Cabinet and named collectors within it. This trail led quickly to the London folklore enthusiast and prolific collector Edward Lovett, and through him to further collections at other institutions, starting with the Scarborough and Cuming museums.[44] In 2010, I was employed on a Designation Challenge Fund (DCF) project to research the amateur folklorist William James Clarke's collection of 'charms' for the Scarborough Museums Trust (SMT).[45] I became intrigued by the ways in which almost all of the collections of English amulets I came across were connected with each other, often through the individual

[43] Roper (ed.), *Verbal Charms*. My own survey may not be entirely comprehensive, but it includes the major relevant collections and a number of smaller ones that have come to my attention. There may well be further examples in local museums or early scientific collections.
[44] See Cadbury, 'Home and Away'. Lovett wrote more than any other collector about English amulets in *Folklore* and elsewhere, while his collections and related correspondence appear in at least 16 other museums and archives.
[45] See T. Cadbury, 'The charms of Scarborough, London etc: the collecting networks of William Clarke and Edward Lovett', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (Vol. 25, 2012), 119-137.

collectors involved but also by their participation in the same cultural movements. This was an insight I thought worth sharing, particularly as I encountered so many people *en route* with an interest in particular collections, collectors and artefact types, none of whom had made connections between them or placed them in their historical and museological context. Having studied and worked in an academic environment for two decades, it seemed appropriate to make my own contribution to my professional field. I finally registered as a part-time postgraduate research student at the University of Bristol in October 2011, with the twin aims of making accessible my accumulated knowledge and upgrading the standard of my work. Further research visits, to the Museum of Cambridge, Museum of Somerset, Pitt Rivers Museum and Museum of Witchcraft and Magic followed in 2012. I made my final research visit in 2013, to examine the Toms collection and archives in Sussex.[46]

I began working towards this thesis by writing up case studies of three contrasting collections: those of Edward Lovett, Frederick Elworthy and Cecil Williamson. These formed the basis of my submission for upgrade to PhD student status in 2013, after which I placed them in their broader historiographical and theoretical contexts by conducting a literature review on recent academic approaches to museums and material culture, magic and modernity. This now forms the basis of Chapter 3. In 2014, having been invited to contribute a chapter on 'Amulets: the material evidence' to Ronald Hutton's edited volume subtitled *A Feeling for Magic*, I attempted to fill any gaps in my

[46] I have undertaken my research part-time alongside working as a curator and, since 2014, parenting.

data by identifying less well-known collections nationally before creating the final version of my spreadsheet.[47] My contribution forms the basis of Chapter 2. At this stage I realised that I needed to place the individual collections within the larger institutional settings of the PRM, Folklore Society (FLS) and MAA, studies of which I wrote up between 2015 and 2017 and which now form the bases of Chapters 4 and 5.

The results of my survey, in addition to my own professional experience and informal enquiries amongst colleagues, enabled me to choose case studies on which to base my core chapters. My selection is neither objective nor arbitrary but based on my own assessment of each collection's significance, using one or more of the following criteria: they were assembled by major proponents of the first folklore movement or of early anthropology (Pitt-Rivers, Tylor and Balfour at Oxford, Haddon at Cambridge,); they were significant collectors at the time (Elworthy in Somerset, Toms in Brighton); or they continue to attract attention and have impact today (Lovett's dispersed collection, Williamson's at the MWM). Like the theoreticians Pitt-Rivers and Tylor, museum professionals including Haddon and Balfour assembled artefacts from networks of amateur field collectors to substantiate their theories. At some institutions, the objects in question are identifiable as a group because they have been included in a distinct display, such as the MAA's Folklore Cabinet, or the PRM's 'magic, ritual, religion and belief'' cases. It must be acknowledged that the displays and cabinets that

[47] See T. Cadbury, 'Amulets: the Material Evidence', in R. Hutton (ed.), *Physical Evidence,* 88-108. My main source for identifying further collections was the K. Dawson and G. Kendall, *Museums and Galleries Yearbook* (London: Museums Association, 2013). I also circulated enquiries through social media networks including those of the MEG, FLS and Social History Curators Group. I researched and wrote the chapter whilst on maternity leave.

are visible today are the outcome of long processes of intervention by generations of museum workers. It is not always possible to discover when they were first put together or by whom, indeed they are palimpsests which have been added to and subtracted from over decades. Nevertheless, I contend that their intellectual roots are clear and connections between them are significant.

In addition to displays, I have used museum catalogues of stored collections to identify objects pertinent to my area of study. My survey includes objects which have been classified as 'charms', 'amulets' and 'magic' in museum documentation systems, but also others which I have deemed to fit into the same class. Terms like these are, of course, subjective; ways in which amulets have been classified differ between institutions and have changed over time. Having catalogued and classified many museum collections myself during the course of my career, I consider such categories to be finding aids rather than analytical tools, though their usage can be informative about the mindsets of people who classified them, and reflective of the times in which they worked. Gosden and Larson argue, for example, that 'Pitt-Rivers, [Henry] Balfour, and others proceeded from the forms of things and groups that made sense to them… never wondering whether their own analytical types accorded with those of the people who made and used the objects'.[48] For the purposes of my study Pitt-Rivers, Balfour and others comprise my 'source communities' or 'communities of provenance'; their 'analytical types' form my subject matter.

[48] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 118.

At the MAA, I began by searching for 'folklore' in the catalogue database; it transpired that all of the museum's English charms and amulets are stored in the Folklore Cabinet. All are now categorised as 'magic and religion', but this classification could have been allocated as part of a retrospective documentation project undertaken during the 1980s. Through their current classification systems, both the PRM and MAA have opted out of debates about the distinction between magic and religion. At the PRM, I began with the current 'magic, ritual, religion and belief' displays then identified further material by using the keyword 'amulet'; again, this term is likely to have been allocated to the many of the objects during retrospective documentation projects in recent decades. Nevertheless, the word 'amulet' is deeply embedded in the museum's classification systems, as evidenced by the 'detailed amulets card catalogue' created between 1908 and 1914 under Balfour's curatorship. At the MAA, by contrast, the term 'folklore' is more prominent than 'magic', presumably because of the collection's roots in that of the Folk-Lore (later Folklore) Society.[49]

In many museums, the objects concerned are regarded as a distinct collection, for example the 'Clarke collection of charms' at Scarborough, the 'Lovett collection of superstitions' at the Cuming Museum, the 'Elworthy collection of amulets and charms' in Somerset, or Toms' 'folklore collection' in Brighton. At some museums, including the Cuming, Scarborough, Taunton and Brighton, I looked into objects sourced through a particular collector (Lovett, Clarke, Elworthy and Toms respectively) then relied on in-house curatorial knowledge

[49] 'Folk-lore', 'folk lore' and 'folklore' have been alternative spellings. I have used the more recently preferred 'folklore' except when quoting from an original source which uses 'folk-lore' or 'folk lore'.

to point me towards any similar collections. At the Imperial War Museum (IWM) and the Wellcome Collection, charms and amulets are coterminous with their Lovett collections, classified as 'Souvenirs and Ephemera' and 'Ethnography and Folk Medicine' respectively, according to the interests of the institution. At the MWM, the dividing line between what to include and what not to include in my survey was more difficult to define; I included objects of folk magic comparable to those seen at other institutions and some which appear to be unique, but excluded those clearly made and used by self-conscious modern occultists. Taking these considerations into account, the results of my survey are outlined in Chapter 2.

1.4. Structure of argument

In addition to the Introduction (Chapter 1) and Conclusion (Chapter 9), the main body of the thesis is divided into seven core chapters. This, the introductory chapter, provides a brief overview of the thesis, outlining its questions and contributions to knowledge. It explains the methodology used, describing the nature of the research conducted and the order in which it was undertaken. Chapter 2 provides a solid evidential base for the thesis by summarising and analysing my survey. Chapter 3 provides a historical and theoretical context for the thesis, examining the four interrelated themes mentioned above, namely modernity, magic, materiality and museums. Subsequent chapters use specific case studies to address these issues by investigating relationships between things (English amulets), people (collectors), institutions (museums) and ideas (about magic, for example) in modern England. Through these case studies, the

thesis re-places the amulets in the historical and intellectual contexts in which they have been collected and interpreted, considering relationships they have brokered over time. My objective is to investigate how these changing relationships have been materialised in museum collections, and what museum collections can reveal about these changing relationships.

Each core chapter addresses one or more key institutions or individuals. The chapters are arranged in a loosely chronological order, although the discussions involved in each may extend beyond its core time-span. Chapter 4 focuses on the collections of General Pitt-Rivers from their inception in the 1850s to their incorporation into the PRM in 1884 and up until the Second World War, exploring relationships between collecting and academic study in the emergence, professionalisation and self-definition of human sciences. Chapter 5 examines the further institutionalisation of objects of English magic, in particular through the FLS and the MAA. It looks into the role of the supposed transformation from antiquarianism to science in the study of commonplace things and the lives of urban and rural working-class people, known then as 'the folk'.[50] Taken together, these three institutions — the PRM, FLS, and MAA — make evident the significance of magical objects in the development of academic disciplines including folklore and anthropology up until the Second World War.

Chapter 6 steps back from these core institutions, focusing instead on the most prolific amateur field-collectors of charms and amulets whose collections were

[50] I use the term 'working-class', for want of a better word or phrase, throughout the thesis to refer to both rural and urban working people, poorer classes or 'ordinary' people.

incorporated by institutions in different ways, in particular Frederick Thomas Elworthy (1830-1907), Edward Lovett (1852-1933) and Herbert Toms (1874–1940). It compares their personal motives and internal conflicts with those of the institutions into which their collections were subsumed. Chapter 7 moves forward in time to the 1930s, Second World War and beyond to consider the changing contexts of English amulets in museums. The chapter investigates the transformation from 'folklore' to 'folklife' in the foundation of folk museums, as well as re-interpretations of earlier collections in the post-war era. By this time, primary collecting by the major institutions — the PRM, FLS and MAA — had tapered off, but existing collections were re-appraised, notably by the folklorist Ellen Ettlinger (1902-1994) and the anthropologist and curator Beatrice Blackwood (1889-1975). The chapter also looks into the ongoing significance Herbert Toms and his collections in a different range of disciplines, particularly their influence on the archaeology and geology of magic. Chapter 8 moves on to the 'second folk revival' which flourished in the post-war decades, appraising a museum apparently entirely outside of the academic establishment, the MWM in Boscastle. It considers how the museum's founders, the occultists Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) and Cecil Williamson (1909-1999), bridged the first and second folk revivals: they were both influenced by and differed from those involved in the first, relying on its collectors for some of their artefacts. The chapter also explores the theme of academic and popular interpretations in museums, bringing our story up to date by looking into the role of museum collections in the creation of new cultural forms. The thesis concludes by summing up how museum collections of English popular magic have materialised relations between people and things.

CHAPTER 2. Amulets: the material evidence

This chapter presents and analyses the results of my survey of English amulets in English museums.[51] Amulets, of which over 1700 remain in museum collections, provide physical evidence for magical practice in modern England. The present study adds to existing academic re-appraisals of material magic. However, it is important to remember that the objects do not provide a purer form of information than words. The amulets that survive and the primary evidence that supports them both depend fundamentally on the historical and intellectual contexts in which they have been collected and interpreted. As Gosden and Larson observe, 'collections do not straightforwardly map the world, encapsulate cultural practices, or reveal indigenous social relations. They are the result of relationships that are always emerging and changing'.[52] Theoreticians shaped their collections around their own ideas, but were also constrained and given opportunities through their relationships with people from whom they collected.

In addition to providing a statistical analysis of the amulets, I have used my survey results to consider what information we have about the relationships in which the objects have been involved during their 'social lives'. Through whose hands did they pass before their arrival in museums?[53] In which institutions have they congregated, and how have these managed and interpreted them?

[51] A version of this chapter was published in Hutton (ed.), *Physical Evidence* in 2015.
[52] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 199.
[53] One object alone (PRM 1908.11.1) exemplifies how many hands an object could pass through before arriving at a museum: a 'limestone pebble hung behind a door as a lucky stone' by William Twizel of Newbiggin-by-the-sea in Northumberland was collected by 'Miss Humble' and given by her to the PRM via the Oxford classicist and amateur archaeologist Alexander James Montgomerie Bell.

From the choices made by the original makers and users about what objects and knowledge to give or sell to collectors, through the fieldworker's decision about what to collect; from the decision of a curator or institution to acquire an object, through the cataloguing and storage that makes it accessible to researchers, to my own choices about what to include in my spreadsheet; all of these stages affect the information that my survey can provide.

Amulets can be defined as material, portable charms to guard against negative influences, or to encourage positive ones. Typical examples include a fossil to keep away to lightning, a holed stone to guard against witchcraft, a mole's foot to fight cramp, or a silver charm against bad luck (*figure 2.1 a-d*). Some amulets have been worn as jewellery, while others can be kept in the pocket, sewn into clothing, concealed or displayed in homes or in barns, on agricultural animals or on vehicles. Verbal and material charms can serve similar purposes, such as looking for love and finding lost property, curing sickness or guarding against witchcraft.[54] Some amulets are both material and verbal; Owen Davies points out that 'in all religions with a literary foundation, holy texts are used to create talismans and amulets that are worn for protection, healing, and good fortune'.[55] Some of these express religious sentiments in writing but display amuletic properties in practice, such as the Lord's Prayer in miniscule handwriting, too small to read.[56] By looking at museum collections of amulets we find that people of all classes used magic to address their everyday troubles, well into the twentieth century at least. The powers that they attributed to the amulets can

[54] See Roper, *Verbal Charms* and (ed.), *Charms, Charmers*.
[55] Davies, *Magic*, 71.
[56] PRM 1985.51.781.

tell us about the problems they faced and the issues that were foremost in their minds. By tracing patterns in the collection and interpretation of amulets, we can also learn about changing intellectual attitudes to magic in modern England.

2.1. Institutions

The survey includes amulets from seventeen different museums (Table 2). At one end of the scale we have the largest systematic folklore collection at the PRM (544 English amulets) while at the other end, just a few objects are housed at older institutions that pre-date the late-nineteenth century folklore movement, the Ashmolean and the British Museum (BM).[57] Few smaller or non-specialist museums were found to have relevant collections, or even isolated artefacts of English magic, Bradford Museum and Art Gallery and Wiltshire Museum, Devizes being exceptions. This leads to my conclusion that a small coterie of individuals was largely responsible for their institutionalisation over a short period of time, during the early days of folklore, anthropology and the human sciences more broadly in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These institutional collections were rooted in (and sometimes incorporated) earlier antiquarian collections, as well as new material collected using nascent ethnographic fieldwork methods.

[57] The Ashmolean houses just one Christian amulet (WA1957.80.8), collected by the wealthy American art collector Walter Leo Hildburgh. The BM's nine English amulets include a flint inscribed 'thunderbolt', donated by Sir Augustine Wollaston Franks and said to date from the eighteenth century (1888,1110.41).

2.2. Collectors

The survey reveals over 80 named individuals through whom museums acquired English amulets, either directly or indirectly, in addition to their original makers and users. Most of these people were conduits for just one or a small number of objects. Some are familiar names in folklore and anthropology, academia and curation, while the rest (for the moment) remain obscure.[58] A few names stand out as particularly significant because of their influence or the size of their collections. Lovett is named as the vendor or donor of some 240 English amulets now housed at a number of institutions and is likely to have been the source of a further 280.[59] The biggest intact collection amassed by one individual is that of William James Clarke (1871-1945), a Scarborough shopkeeper, natural historian, honorary curator and amateur folklorist. Clarke bequeathed about 294 English amulets, as part of a larger collection of popular charms, to what is now the SMT. Clarke's correspondence and scrapbooks demonstrate that his interpretations were heavily influenced by Lovett, from whom many of his objects were obtained in exchange. Frederick Elworthy donated a large collection of objects, associated with his influential book *The Evil Eye*, to what is now the MoS; these include about 30 English amulets later transferred to the PRM.[60] 23 objects at the PRM are attributed to Tylor, his wife Anna Rebecca and his niece Dorothy, while Balfour is named as the source for 13. Herbert Toms, curator of the

[58] Familiar names include Beatrice Blackwood, John Elmslie Horniman, Kenneth Oakley, General Pitt Rivers, Edmund Crosby Quiggin, William Ridgeway and Arthur Robinson Wright.
[59] These comprise First World War soldiers' charms at IWM, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery and the National Museum of Wales (NMW), 'the Lovett collection of superstitions' at the Cuming Museum in Southwark, amulets for healing and protecting health in the Wellcome Collection, and a variety of amulets at the PRM, most of which were transferred from the Wellcome in 1984.
[60] F. T. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye: The Origins and Practices of Superstition* (London: John Murray, 1895).

Brighton Museum and (now Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, BMAG) from 1896-1939, collected about 30 fossils, stones and other objects used as amulets in local rural areas. Toms trained under General Pitt-Rivers, who also trained Harold St George Gray (1872-1969). The latter became curator of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society's museum in Taunton from 1901-1949, where he accessioned Elworthy's material. None of these collections would have made their way into museums without the intellectual climate characterised by the social evolutionary theories of Tylor and Frazer, or without curators who took folklore seriously, notably Balfour, the PRM's first curator from 1893 until his death, and Haddon, advisory curator at the Horniman from 1901-1915 and honorary curator at the MAA (then the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, MAE) from 1922-1922. These are the individuals and institutions from whom and which I have selected my case studies.

2.3. Temporal distribution

Little information is available about the dates at which the objects were originally made and used, but we often know the date when they were collected or catalogued, and from this we can infer a *terminus ante quem*. The earliest secure date we have for popular English amulets entering a public museum collection is 1884 — these form part of the PRM's founding collection, donated by General Pitt Rivers himself. Just nine of the objects surveyed are said to have been used earlier, during the eighteenth century. Most are recorded as having been collected directly from the people who used them, or who remembered their immediate predecessors using them, so the dates on which they are known

to have been used reflect the extent of living memory at their time of collection. This places most of the amulets in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; these objects joined the vanguard of the human sciences in their early, social evolutionary, manifestation in museums.

Field collecting of English amulets peaked numerically between the 1910s and the 1940s, largely due to Lovett's material and especially boosted by his First World War soldiers' amulets, although museums continued to collect more traditional material alongside Lovett's. Primary ethnographic collecting, including that of English amulets, had tailed off by the 1920s at the core institutions of Oxford and Cambridge. Collecting by individuals attached to regional museums flourished in the 1930s, however, with significant collections made by Toms of Brighton and Clarke of Scarborough (Chapter 6). Amateur folklorists' collections continued to enter museums until the 1940s, but after the Second World War swathes of objects were transferred between museums as their interests and emphases changed (Chapter 7). Although the heyday of primary folklore collecting rooted in the first folk revival had passed by the time of the Second World War, the classification, analysis and re-interpretation of some of these collections continued 'behind the scenes' from the 1930s onwards. In England, social history and 'folklife' museums took on the task of representing English urban and rural working-class people respectively, while anthropology museums aimed towards objective representation of primarily non-European cultures. Collections that were made during the first folk revival remained in museums, becoming relics of earlier academic fashions.

2.4. Geographical distribution

The majority of the amulets are provenanced, if only by county. Although the collections as a whole include items from many parts of England, there is a noticeable concentration of artefacts local to the museums that house them. The fact that fewer amulets were collected from certain regions of England (Table 3) probably reflects the distribution of interested institutions, curators and collectors, rather than suggesting that comparable traditions did not exist elsewhere. London figures prominently because of Lovett's interests, while the North East is dominated by Clarke's collections at Scarborough. Tylor and Elworthy's presence in Somerset, Lovett's visits to Devon, and Williamson's move to Cornwall enhance collections from the South West. Collections from the Midlands and the North West are small, as no major institutions or collectors in these regions appear to have shown an interest in English amulets.

2.5. Physical form

The amulets surveyed incorporate a wide range of materials: natural objects or parts of objects (mineral, vegetable, animal and human), artefacts originally made for other purposes (such as nails, pins and screws), natural objects incorporated into assemblages (such as a holed stone on a string with a key), items hand-made as amulets (including trench art) and artefacts mass-produced as charms (*figure 2.2 a-e*). Stones, with and without holes (100 and 80 respectively), are the natural objects most frequently used in the amulets surveyed. Other commonly used natural objects include fossils, bones, shells and

the mineral iron pyrites. Animal remains include moles' feet, teeth, pierced hearts, eel skins, dried frogs and tongues, while cauls (foetal membranes) and teeth constitute human remains. Plants and plant materials include dried potatoes, nuts, beans and mandrake roots. Many amulets take the form of personal ornaments and jewellery — pendants, necklaces, beads, bracelets, finger rings and other jewellery, as well as buttons and badges, shoes and a baby's cap. Metal artefacts said to have been used as amulets include coins, horse-shoes, horse brasses, keys, pins, nails and screws. Corks were also popular amulets, used for protection by soldiers and kept in bags against cramp. Finally, there are fourteen written charms amongst the amulets surveyed. Mostly collected by Lovett and Clarke, these were said to have been used for healing domestic animals and for protection from evil spirits, witchcraft and toothache.

2.6. Uses of amulets

Although the purposes with which the amulets were used can tell us about the mindset of the people who made and used them, the information we have still comes from the mouths (or pens) of collectors. We have only the object itself and the collector's brief words telling us, for example, that this holed stone kept away witches, or that mole's foot was used to cure cramp. Protection against illness and against witchcraft is not mutually exclusive, as witches sometimes supposedly caused sickness. In general terms, amulets were expected to 'accentuate the positive': to bring health, love or luck, or to attract specific benefits such as wealth, or to 'eliminate the negative': to protect against sickness, infertility, teething, accidents, death, nightmares or witchcraft.

Table 4 lists the recorded uses of the amulets. In order of frequency we have amulets simply for 'luck' (435 of them, including many used by soldiers and fishermen in their supremely dangerous professions), most of which are mass-produced charms collected by Lovett. Next, we have charms for the prevention or cure of specific ailments (356 of them, see Table 5), the most frequent of which are cramp, rheumatism, toothache, colds, teething, fits or epilepsy and warts. The range of ailments listed suggests that these amulets may have had the psychological effect of helping their users to 'feel better', as the conditions described are indiscriminate, recurrent and relatively minor, but chronically blighted the lives of a great many people. A further 526 are for 'protection' against a variety of ills: for soldiers in warfare; against witchcraft, accidents and being struck by lightning; for the protection of agricultural animals and, in the case of charms of Mediterranean origin, against the evil eye. Finally, we have amulets said to attract specific benefits, from mass-produced promises of long life and prosperity, to those required for specific activities such as a good catch for fishermen, or good luck in gambling. I have included love charms and objects used for casting wishes — bent pins, for example — in this category. While many amulets were intended to protect against witchcraft (61, including holed stones, pierced animal hearts and dried frogs in a bag), just 8 were specifically targeted at countering witchcraft by harming the witch, and these are of one type only — the animal heart pierced with pins, nails or thorns.

In some instances the Christian God or a saint is thought to be the source of good fortune. Most of the explicitly Christian amulets covered by the survey are Italian charms used in England, reflecting the collectors' views of Catholic practices as

magical, a recurrent theme in Protestant writing about Catholic practices since the Reformation. Religious amulets include trench art charms, medallions, and a crucifix used for protection from nightmares.[61] Some of the objects express religious sentiments in writing but display amuletic properties in practice, such as the Lord's Prayer written on a tiny piece of paper, too small to read.[62] The benefits expected from religious amulets were much the same as those provided by non-religious ones — they were used for protecting travellers and soldiers, against evil and nightmares, and for good luck in general.

2.7. Small rituals

In nearly 700 cases, the documentation hints at how the amulets were used in practice. The statistics show that most of them were kept on the person. Over 250 of them were worn, some in specific ways — around the neck, in the hatband, hat or tunic, next to the skin, round the finger or leg, or under clothing. Other amulets were hung around the necks of cows or other livestock. More than 200 objects are specified as having been carried — many in the pocket, some specifically in a purse or bag. Others were kept around the home or in the workplace. Some were hung or secured, most commonly on or near a door or bed (under the bed or pillow, on the bedstead or simply in the bedroom), others on windowsills and mantelpieces, near windows and fireplaces, and in chimneys, on hearths and railings. Some were simply hung on or nailed to a wall or from a beam. It has been pointed out that all of these are liminal places, potentially

[61] PRM 1985.51.520.
[62] PRM 1985.51.781.

vulnerable to outside influences such as witchcraft.[63] As well as in homes, amulets were used in stables and farm buildings, gardens, markets and churches, tucked into keyholes and hidden in attics. They were found on vehicles as well as on beasts of burden, costers' barrows and vans; on boats they were nailed to masts and rudders or inserted into fishing floats. Although my survey excludes 'deliberately concealed objects' found undocumented, comparisons could usefully be drawn by specialists in the subject.

Jonathan Roper demonstrates that ritual 'preconditions and postconditions', such as secrecy, silence, fasting or prayers, were often required to render verbal charms effective.[64] He explains that written charms usually had to be 'performed by a legitimate person (often using special accompanying actions and accessories)'.[65] By contrast, my survey gives only a few hints at small rituals required to activate amulets. Such actions include pins actuated by bending them before throwing them into a well, a coin bent to render it 'lucky', notched twigs rubbed on warts and then thrown away, a stone stroked to heal ailments, a piece of coal spat upon and carried for luck, and a dried potato that had to be stolen to render it efficacious against rheumatism.[66] Piercing, too, may have constituted a ritual activation — a toad pierced with thorns to protect against witchcraft, or a sheep's heart pierced with pins and nails to break a witch's spell.[67] Sometimes wrapping may have been part of the procedure used to make an object effective, for example a 'cramp ring of thin twig wrapped in pale blue silk', a phial of

[63] See Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (London: Batsford, 1987), 135.
[64] Roper (ed.), *Verbal Charms*, 189.
[65] Roper (ed.), *Verbal Charms,* 15.
[66] PRM 1917.53.662.1-4 and others, SMT 1946.162, PRM 1985.51.234-5, MoW 274, SMT 1946.178 and PRM 1894.46.1 respectively.
[67] PRM 1917.53.601 and PRM 1985.51.177.

mercury wrapped in leather, and a dried potato wrapped in a piece of rag.[68] Some amulets were activated by their use on specific occasions in the calendar or life-cycle — the first thing taken into a house at the new year, or an amulet given to a baby, to newlyweds or to sailors setting out to sea. All of these are small rituals by which users could set the object's power in motion themselves, without recourse to a cunning-person or priest. In some instances, an amulet's effect may have been practical as well as magical — a plastic pendant rubbed on a child's gums to prevent toothache, for example.[69] Only the occultist Cecil Williamson, writing in the 1950s or later about how the objects in his collection were used, goes into greater and possibly spurious detail concerning rituals that he asserts were undertaken by 'witches'.[70]

2.8. Makers and users

Over 400 of the records surveyed have some information about the person from whom the object was sourced, if only their profession, usually that of a soldier. The documentation provides few clues about how the people who used them acquired the amulets, or how they were forfeited to collectors. Examples include a piece of coal 'sent to soldier at the Front for Luck by the sister of a trooper', a fossil ammonite 'given to donor's father by a local farmer who found it in his field', and mass-produced Fumsup dolls 'given by girlfriends and family to

[68] SM/W A79914, SM/W A666071 and SMT 1946.180 respectively.
[69] SM/W A666112.
[70] Williamson frequently provides an extraordinary amount of detail about how objects were used, for example in his label text for MoW 210, a Somerset 'wish stone' from 'Old Meg the Milk', he says that such stones are 'an important tool and must for most working witches' which 'they hold in the palm of their left hand and with the thumb they rub the stone with a forward movement. This they do in synchronization to the rhythm of a chanted or muttered spell'.

soldiers'.[71] The survey reveals 32 different vernacular names used for a total of 115 objects, examples of these being 'cramp nuts' (fungal growths) used against cramp, 'Thor's hammers' (sheep's bones) used by fishermen to prevent drowning, and 'thunderbolts' (fossilized belemnites) used to protect against lightning. Early folklorists tended to read too much into vernacular names, citing them as evidence for continuity with ancient beliefs about witches, fairies and thunder-gods, but the survey tells us much less about the actual beliefs and practices of people who made and used the objects.[72] Indeed, it reveals little evidence that the amulets were anything but self-administered.

For a small minority of the amulets, we have the name of an original user or the person from whom the object was collected. It is striking that in those cases where the collector was keen to prove the authenticity of the piece, more detail was given about the identity of the source. For example, a 'witch's wreath' arrived at the BM in 1941 with documentation claiming that it had belonged to Mary Holt, 'a well known wise woman of Stratton'. The wreath was later demonstrated to be a fake.[73] The MWM holds ten English amulets that its creator and curator, Cecil Williamson, attributed to individuals with names like 'Old Granny Rowe' and 'Mrs Sally Semmens'; he referred to such people as 'Auntie Mays'.[74] Other than these, original users are named for just ten objects. These

[71] IWM EPH 4894, MoW 187, MoW 1567 and 1738 respectively.
[72] Only one English object in my survey is said to have been used to guard against fairies (PRM 1884.56.80, a 'witch post'), and that attribution is likely to be speculative.
[73] BM 1941.1208.1; Mark Jones (ed.), *Fake?: The Art of Deception* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), 84.
[74] Mrs Semmens is cited as the source for a breast-shaped piece of lead used to increase the flow of breast milk (MoW 1530). Williamson also refers to her as 'Singing Sal of Wells' and as 'a green witch' in his original object label. Steve Patterson, in *Cecil Williamson's book of witchcraft: a*

include a holed stone worn by 'W. Hockliffe, mail driver on the St Neots to Cambridge route' and a fossil sea urchin used by a Mr B. Avery from the village of Woodcutts in North Dorset, who placed it on his cottage window-sill as a charm 'against lightning, witchcraft, bad luck &c'.[75] More usually — though still in a minority of cases — we have a generic description of the user, but their gender is rarely mentioned. Often a trade or profession is given, some of which I have assumed to be female and some male according to the social conventions of the time, while others could be either sex ('a coster', 'a fish worker on the pier' or 'a traveller'). Most of the objects surveyed could have been used by either sex — those used to cure rheumatism or keep away nightmares, for example.

Just 26 amulets are specified as having been used by women, but if we include those most likely to have been used (given the time-period in question) by females — for contraception and conception, childbirth, pregnancy, breast-feeding and childcare more broadly — the total rises to 50.[76] These include the BM fake mentioned above as well as eleven of Williamson's examples, but also those addressing more common concerns, including a holed stone hung on a bed-head against witchcraft and four cod otoliths (part of the inner ear) used for contraception.[77] Of the fifteen objects used by babies and children, most were worn around the neck for healing childhood ailments and protecting health —

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grimoire of the Museum of Witchcraft (London: Troy Books, 2014), 198-199, comments further on Williamson's 'Auntie Mays'.

[75] MAA E 1906.302 and catalogue number unknown, respectively. This information is taken from a 1939 display label kept in the museum's archive. Although the Toms took photographs of the people from whom he collected fand made meticulous notes including their names, I have been unable to match most of these with specific objects.

[76] Most of the collectors were male, which could have restricted their access to female practices.

[77] MoC 910.86, PRM 1985.51.520, PRM 1985.51.569, PRM 1985.51.345.1-2 and SMT 1946.397 respectively.

whether to facilitate teething (necklaces of human and animal teeth, pimento berries or woody nightshade) or to prevent fits (ash twigs), sore throats (coral), bronchitis (glass beads) or whooping cough (human hair). At the other end of the age range we have 13 amulets specifically said to be used by older people — as might be expected, these guard against cramp, rheumatism and toothache, but also against mad dogs, nightmares and hunger.

By contrast, 311 objects were definitely or probably used by men (given the time-period in question), including named individuals and those identified only by their trade. Soldiers are the most commonly represented group — largely due to Lovett's interest during the First World War — followed by fishermen, with 40 examples. They were used against rheumatism and cramp, to prevent drowning and to ensure a good catch of fish. In contrast to the soldiers' amulets, those collected from fishermen were not mass-produced. Pieces of amber were popular for fishermen, as were less sea-specific objects such as fossils and bones. Fish hawkers, fish porters and fish workers used similar charms — they could have been male or female. Sailors and seamen are represented in the collections by over 30 amulets, used against rheumatism, drowning and storms, and for luck. The human caul was most frequently used by sailors, who also used more generic items such as bones, stones and pieces of coal, as well as medallions with Christian inscriptions and imagery. Some artefacts were crafted specifically for sailors, including a ship in a bottle, glass rolling pins, and decorative pincushions.

Other trades and professions are represented in smaller numbers — a carter, dairyman, farmer, flint digger, gardener, miner and so on. The class of many is

emphasised by the documentation, whether lower or higher — Lovett's 'waitress in a cheap London restaurant' carried a piece of coal for luck, while a caul was 'greatly prized' by lawyers 'to confer on them the gift of eloquence'.[78] It is notable that the vast majority of users, where specified, were ordinary people rather than 'cunning folk'. The few exceptions are a holed stone used against nightmares, obtained by Lovett from an Exmouth 'wise woman', and several artefacts at the MWM that are said to have been sourced from 'witches', including a bag of bees for 'health, happiness and sweet good fortune' obtained from a 'witch' in Dawlish.[79] Some of Williamson's claims that 'witches' used the amulets in his museum stretch the definition of 'witchcraft' to its limits;[80] his interpretations conform to popular conceptions of magic and witchcraft as mysterious female arts, but the survey tells a different story.

2.9. Conclusion to Chapter 2

In summary, my survey indicates that the magic of amulets was mundane, targeted at everyday problems. The amulets seem to have been self-activated rather than requiring ritual specialists such as cunning folk or other 'service magicians' to render them effective.[81] Men appear to have used everyday magic at least as commonly as women (although this could reflect a bias in the objects

[78] PRM 1985.51.690 and SMT 1946.95 respectively.
[79] SMT 1946.299 and MoW 262 respectively.
[80] For example, a mass-produced Touch-Wood crescent moon charm (MoW 2542) is labelled as a 'witches' charm', whereas similar examples at other institutions are called 'mascots' are said to have been used by soldiers. Philip Heselton in *Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration* (Milverton, Somerset: Capall Bann, 2003) and Patterson in *Cecil Williamson* both give Williamson the benefit of the doubt, crediting him with recording previously undocumented witchcraft traditions.
[81] The term 'service magician' was recently coined by Ronald Hutton in *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2017).

preserved), while mass-produced artefacts were as potent as individually modified natural objects. It seems unlikely that the users of amulets considered themselves to be magicians or practitioners of magic; they were simply hoping to cure or prevent a particular affliction or to improve their prospects in life. The source of protective power was generally indeterminate. Amulets with and without overt religious symbolism were used in identical ways. People sought what might be termed ritual or supernatural solutions to everyday obstacles without thinking too carefully about how they worked (rationalising them). They used any means available to protect and make flourish their persons, possessions and property, whatever they perceived the source of their fortunes and misfortunes to be.

Can these objects, then, be reasonably referred to as 'magical'? If we choose to do so, we must acknowledge that we are imposing an external classification. The historian Bob Trubshaw has explained that 'modern minds since the mid-nineteenth century generally blur the distinction between religion and magic […] when the evidence being offered is for the survival, not of religion, but of magical practices'.[82] Although the historian Keith Thomas has argued that 'the line between magic and religion' is 'difficult to recognise in medieval England', my survey suggests that it may have been obscure in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries too, even as the involvement of clergymen and cunning folk declined.[83] While early anthropologists and folklorists came up with overarching theories linking amulets to ancient religion and belief, makers and users of amulets

[82] B. Trubshaw, *Explore Folklore* (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 2002), 41.
[83] K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).

sought solutions to their troubles through practical combinations of the approaches that have been called magic, religion and science — whichever offered them most hope. Although the makers and users may not have considered these things to be magical, the theoreticians and curators through whom they entered museums undoubtedly thought that they were 'collecting magic'. I use the term, therefore, because these it is these collectors who comprise the main focus of my study.

CHAPTER 3. Historical and theoretical context

Having described my primary source material in detail, my next objective is to provide historical and theoretical context for these collections, making clear their historical significance and current academic interest. Objects of English magic are missing from most historical accounts of museums, including those of folklife and social history.[84] This chapter therefore explores why the amulets around which my study orbits entered museums during the modern era, usually defined as commencing in the mid-eighteenth century, and their continuing significance today. We have seen that founders and followers of the 'first folk revival' and early anthropologists amassed most of these objects. Their assemblages reflect currents in the history of collecting which flowed from eighteenth-century antiquarian interests and fed into twentieth-century museum genres of ethnography, archaeology, folklife and later social history. The objects' interest, in this context, lies in the light they can shed on changing post-Enlightenment attitudes to magic and to materiality, refracted through patterns in their academic, professional and popular embracement and abandonment. The case studies chosen for the thesis repeatedly demonstrate how the collection and analysis of amulets became entangled with issues of professional pride and

[84] Critical histories of museums consulted include E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992); G. Kavanagh (ed.), *Making Histories in Museums* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1996); N. Merriman (ed.), *Making Early Histories in Museums* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999)*;* K. Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); F. Nadis, *Wonder Shows: performing science, magic and religion in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); S. J. Knell, *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

competition for social status as collections were institutionalised and new human sciences emerged.[85]

Douglas has demonstrated that the 1890s was a pivotal decade for collecting material folklore.[86] The remit of this thesis is both broader and narrower than this, focusing in on collections pertaining to magic, but contextualizing these both before and after the apex of colonial collecting. Although my temporal focus is on the 'high tide' of collecting at the height of the British Empire from the 1880s until the 1930s, when most of the artefacts in question were acquired by museums, this is contextualised within the century between the Great Exhibition and the Festival of Britain (circa 1850-1950). These dates coincide with the time-span between Lane Fox' (Pitt-Rivers') first displays of 'superstitions' at Bethnal Green and the relocation of Williamson's Museum of Witchcraft to Boscastle, Cornwall. This temporal span is further embedded within a longer historical trajectory from sixteenth century curiosity cabinets, through the foundation of the BM in the eighteenth century and museum transformations in the later twentieth century, until today.

The present chapter is divided into four sections: museums, modernity, materiality and magic. The first section allows the case studies used in the thesis to be situated within the history of museums as part of broader intellectual culture from the mid- sixteenth until the mid-twentieth century. The following

[85] See P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 134, on professional pride amongst historians.
[86] Douglas, *Material Culture*.

sections allow the case studies to be located within recent academic debates, demonstrating why these collections are of renewed interest in the twenty-first century. Issues broached include the development of new professions (curators and academics) institutions (learned societies, museums) and academic disciplines (natural history, folklore, anthropology, archaeology) and shifting definitions of magic, religion and science, themes which are then woven throughout the thesis.

3.1. Museums

Issues of social class are evident the history of museums, which is usually traced from aristocratic sixteenth century 'cabinets of curiosity', through 'scientific' collections from the eighteenth century onwards, to the public museums of today. Museum history is shown to be one of democratisation, starting in the seventeenth century with private collections, which then enter public institutions that become progressively public. Their trajectory moves from upper-class curiosity, through middle-class utility to popular democracy, towards twenty-first century aspirations to 'decolonise' museums altogether. Likewise, the representation of people in official museums has gradually become more democratic. Prior to the first folklore movement and the development of human sciences, museums focussed on the wonderful and the curious, on the monstrous and the miraculous, on 'high culture' and 'great civilisations'.[87]

[87] Histories of early museums consulted include R.F. Ovenell, *The Ashmolean Museum 1683-1894* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); D. Wilson, *The British Museum: purpose and politics* (London: British Museum, 1989); M. Caygill and J. Cherry (eds.), *A.W. Franks: Nineteenth-Century Collecting and the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1997); T. A. Joyce and O.

English collections (narrowly defined), rooted from their beginnings in a fascination with exotic things, were 'built on the foundations of aristocratic and gentlemanly travel'.[88] Material objects in museums were a crucial element in the development of modern scientific methods, through which knowledge about the world is achieved through empirical observation, as opposed to innate knowledge or reason alone.[89] The historical geographer David Livingstone, writing in 2003, argues that 'science is not to be thought of as some transcendent entity' but that 'there are always stories to be told of how scientific knowledge came to be made where and when it did'.[90] Livingstone's reviewers explain his stance that the scientific revolution in Europe must be understood 'in relation to the cultural specifics of religion and politics'. 'English science' in particular was formed in relation to exploration, empire and the effects of post-Reformation religious conflicts between Catholic and Protestant viewpoints 'on matters of scientific authority and the value attributed to experimentation' — that is, material proof — from the sixteenth century onwards.[91] Livingstone refers to museums as 'cabinets of accumulation' within his 'range of sites within which

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M.Dalton,*Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1910); S. Pearce *et. al.* (eds.), *The Collector's Voice*, Vols. 1-4 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000-2002).

[88] K. Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 17.

[89] Analyses of early museum collecting consulted include A. Shelton, 'Cabinets of Transgression', in J. Elsner and R. Cardinal (eds.), *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books,1994); S. Pearce, *On Collecting: an investigation into collecting in the European tradition.* (London: Routledge, 1995); Merriman, *Early Histories*; P. Kell, 'The Ashmolean Museum: a case study of eighteenth-century collecting', in Knell (ed.), *Museums;* K. Arnold, *Cabinets;* J. Siegel, *The Emergence of the Modern Museum: an anthology of nineteenth-century sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[90] D. N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 13-14.

[91] P.O. Muller and J. N. Entrikin, 'Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge' (book review), *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Vol. 96, No. 2), 440-442.

science has been practiced, in which meaning has been made and remade, and from which scientific knowledge spreads'.[92]

As science became an increasingly demarcated area of knowledge, its boundaries were defended. The museologist Anthony Shelton explains that sixteenth century upper-class 'cabinets of curiosity' — intended to mirror God's world — were distinguished from lower-class freak-shows, curiosity shops or commodities, as respectable gentlemen began to arrange their collections according to 'scientific' principles. Such collections, says Shelton, reached their heyday in about 1550, waned by the seventeenth century and by 1750 (the nominal start of the 'modern era', when the BM was founded) were rare.[93] The museologist Ken Arnold explains that 'in a variety of public spaces, English men and women of almost all ranks had long been exposed to a variety of "raree shows" displaying exotic artefacts, animals and people, as well as to wondrous relics displayed in places of worship'.[94] Patricia Kell, in her study of the Ashmolean's eighteenth-century collecting practices, also points out that 'the museum's roots [were] planted simultaneously in the rarefied confines of the virtuoso cabinet and in the public exhibition of freaks and curiosities'.[95] Cabinets were upper-class and exclusive, the boundary with lower-class entertainment was guarded, and quotidian artefacts were not represented.

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[92] Livingstone, *Science*, 17.
[93] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 180. The British Museum was the world's first national public museum, granting free admission to all 'studious and curious persons'. Sir Hans Sloane bequeathed his collection to the nation and on 7 June 1753 the museum was established by an Act of Parliament. See Trustees of the British Museum, 'History of the British Museum', *www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/general_history.aspx* (London: Trustees of the British Musuem, 2019), accessed 10 Jul. 2019.
[94] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 18.
[95] Kell, 'Ashmolean', 38.

These early collections were global in reach. Shelton explores the incorporation of objects from the New World into seventeenth century European collections, explaining that artefacts from around the globe were 'chiefly included for comparison with classical or Christian religion' and 'specific cultural attributes were ignored by a discourse that subsumed difference under the general categories of the pagan and the marvellous'.[96] Until the seventeenth century, collectors had sought 'not common or typical items, but rare, exotic and extraordinary testaments to a world subject to divine caprice'.[97] The all-encompassing category of 'pagan' 'incorporated the people and the customs of the fourth continent into the same class as the inhabitants of the classical world and barbarian Europe', as reflected by the inaccurate provenances afforded to these objects.[98]

The anthropologist Nicholas Thomas examines the 'artificial curiosities' brought back from Captain James Cook's late-eighteenth century Pacific voyages, explaining that prior to this time, curiosity and collecting were perceived as luxurious rather than virtuous.[99] The Enlightenment era of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe is widely described as having been accompanied by secularisation, the decline or transformation of institutionalised religion and a revived admiration for Classical humanist learning. In the mid-eighteenth century, according to Shelton, Christian interpretations were superseded by secular ones in museums, while aristocratic curiosity was superseded by a new

[96] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 193.
[97] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 185.
[98] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 201.
[99] N. Thomas, 'Licensed Curiosity: Cook's Pacific Voyages', in Elsner and Cardinal, *Cultures*, 118.

middle-class assessment of objects from around the world for their utility value and economic use.[100] According to Shelton subsequent collections hovered 'somewhere between medieval magic and enlightened scientific demonstration'.[101] In England, however, the Enlightenment occurred in the context of Protestantism, as highlighted by the historian Roy Porter, who observes that 'advanced thinkers tended not so much to be hostile to Christianity *per sé*, or to religion in general, but were rather concerned to achieve a purified, refined expression of faith, which would prove commensurable with reason and science'.[102] As we have seen, Catholic practices came to be associated with 'magic', as opposed to the Protestant religious ideal. This was the worldview of many of the theorists, collectors and curators in the case studies that follow.

The geographer John Pickstone makes the point that there are 'historical relations between knowledge and practice, or science and technology', that is, practice shapes theory and vice-versa.[103] He identifies four 'ways of knowing' or 'ways of deriving meaning' which developed in Western Europe from the end of the eighteenth century, alongside four new 'means of intervening in the world' or 'ways of working', one of which was 'the researcher'. According to Pickstone, new ideas and theories were generated in the context of 'changes in professional and educational structures' including the academic profession itself as 'professors of philosophy and literature joined those of natural sciences'.[104]

[100] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 185.
[101] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 181.
[102] R. Porter, *The Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 33.
[103] J. V. Pickstone, *Ways of Knowing: a new history of science, technology and medicine*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2000.
[104] Pickstone, *Ways*, 16-17. According to Pickstone, this shift began in German universities from about 1800. The Brothers Grimm started collecting folktales in about 1808, published in 1812.

Museums, for example, became places where knowledge was deliberately created through what was collected and how it was organised. The case studies which follow demonstrate that the collections under scrutiny were amassed with the intention of creating particular types of knowledge. The people who institutionalised them were part of a post-Enlightenment movement which began to separate human sciences from natural sciences and bring both into the remit of universities and museums. Many of the individuals in my case studies began their careers in natural sciences before shifting towards human sciences, bringing scientific ways of knowing and ways of working with them.

Arnold's *Cabinets for the Curious* applies this point to the origins of museums in England and their role in 'the production of factual knowledge during the scientific revolution' of the eighteenth century, identifying the 'development of three dominant strategies for knowledge-creation in museums — narrative, functional and taxonomic'.[105] The taxonomic strategy, which analysed 'how to order and arrange the gathered objects' and the relationships between them, had become dominant by the middle of the eighteenth century.[106] Museum taxonomies were initially centred on 'classifying God's work', but by the end of the nineteenth century, as scientific understanding challenged religion, 'a dominant assumption that all knowledge could be defined in terms of order' had arisen.[107] Arnold's point can be applied to objects of popular magic; museums increasingly valued artefacts of popular culture as scientific specimens. Ettlinger came to a similar conclusion in the 1940s with regards to amulets specifically,

[105] Arnold, *Cabinets*, ix, 4.
[106] Arnold, *Cabinets,* 6, 236.
[107] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 211, 237.

categorising museums containing amulets as 'A' and 'B' museums, representing 'different points of view' and 'one scientific ideal' respectively.[108]

Arnold reports that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a distinction emerged between the respectable 'material culture of art and natural history on the one hand, and a more commercial and popular culture of historical, exotic and human material on the other. The former was enshrined in "permanent" and educationally established museums, the latter often moving through circuits of sideshows and entertainment emporia'.[109] Natural science, but not yet human science, was intellectually respectable. The social and cultural theorist Tony Bennett, in his study *The Birth of the Museum,* explores the historical development of official and popular forms of exhibition, arguing that when a nineteenth century museum emphasised its 'scientific and instructional qualities, this was as much a way of declaring that it was not a circus or a fair as it was a means of stressing its differences from earlier collections of curiosities'.[110] In the context of nineteenth century colonialism, argues Thomas, former 'curios' came to be seen as 'a sign of idolatry or cannibalism' against which European social development could be measured.[111] Collecting activities that were previously regarded as 'mere curiosity' became legitimate, cerebral and, according to Thomas, respectably masculine, while the 'curios' themselves became 'specimens'.[112] In this context, we can see that the collectors and curators explored through my case studies felt the need to distance themselves from

[108] E. Ettlinger, 'Documents of British Superstition', *Oxford Folklore* (Vol. 54, No. 1, Mar. 1943), 228.
[109] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 239.
[110] T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995).
[111] Thomas, 'Licensed Curiosity', 122.
[112] Thomas, 'Licensed Curiosity', 126.

entertainers and to make the case for English amulets, with their powerful human interest and potential curiosity value, to be accepted as scientific specimens worthy of inclusion in museums. Aspirant scientific collectors of English amulets, from Pitt-Rivers onwards, were concerned to differentiate their motives from 'idle curiosity', although this boundary has often been difficult to define. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that working-class people or 'the folk' themselves — including their popular magical practices or 'superstitions' — became subjects of study in museums, and then invariably as 'evidence' serving social evolutionary theories.

3.2. Modernity

In recent decades, academics have acknowledged that modernity has never existed in isolation; streams of nonmodernity and anti-modernity have always intertwined. Technological developments of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Industrial Revolution had global impacts as the British Empire spread throughout the world, reaching its apex in the century between the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War. Globalisation involved the mass movement of people, objects and ideas around the world, and the imposition or acceptance of capitalism and Christianity throughout the empire. In turn, however, Europe's encounter with global cultures profoundly affected how 'the West' saw itself. As the pace of change accelerated at home, attention turned to what seemed to be obsolescent ways of life within the British Isles and their comparison with those of indigenous peoples encountered in the colonies. Comparisons were drawn between working-class people at home and colonial

subjects encountered overseas, both of whom became objects of both fascination and suspicion; they were variously romanticised, ridiculed and feared. The beliefs and practices of the former were understood to be 'survivals' of the past in the present, while the latter were thought to provide a window into the past and the subconscious of Europeans. British intellectuals found ways to compare and contrast themselves with both. As well as the potential political power of 'the masses' at home in the wake of the French Revolution, English élites were fearful of their perceived irrationality. The majority of English amulets entered museums via late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century collectors who aspired to scientific objectivity. The case studies which follow, therefore, consider the juxtaposition, in museum collections, of English magical objects with those from the rest of Britain, Europe and the world.

Collections of English magical objects in English museums reflected new ways in which intellectuals thought about themselves and others, backed up by the material 'evidence' amassed in these collections. People and objects were slotted into overarching intellectual theories concerning 'cultural diffusion' and 'social evolution'. In this context, institutions such as the FLS (of which many of the collectors in question were members) and university museums (such as the MAA in Cambridge and the PRM in Oxford) were founded. Their histories were bound up with the development and definition of modernity, with English, British and European national identity, and with the British Empire. In England itself — as with overseas ethnographic collections — power, class and gender differences existed between collectors and the people from whom they collected. Nevertheless, Clayton warns us against making direct comparisons between

Britain's working-class people and its colonial subjects, noting the 'gross imbalance of political and economic power' between the people of Britain and its empire.[113] In Britain, as social hierarchies became more flexible with the development of the industrial middle-classes, collecting was one way in which upwardly mobile individuals, such as Lovett and Toms, negotiated their place in the class system.

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, ideas of evolution and progress prevailed in many fields, from Charles Darwin's natural selection to Herbert Spencer's social evolutionism. Richards and Clayton explain that whereas 'Darwin saw the process of evolution… merely as *change* over time, Spencer saw this change in terms of *progress*'.[114] The deluge of 'facts' with which Tylor and Frazer's books are packed were justified by placing them within cultural evolutionary schema. This allowed them, as pioneering theoreticians of magic, to presume the inevitable progress of humankind towards 'civilisation' along European lines, and in particular from magical thinking to scientific and religious (and from their point of view, preferably Protestant) thinking.[115] Their theories enabled them to categorise traits that they perceived to be irrational within their own society — particularly amongst working-class people — as 'survivals' from an earlier stage in the evolution of civilisation. It was within this late Victorian and Edwardian cultural context that most English amulets entered museum collections, to be displayed alongside artefacts from all over the world, where they served as

[113] Clayton, 'Introduction', *Musical renaissance*.
[114] Richards and Clayton, *English Musical Identity*, 19.
[115] E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray, 1871); J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a Study in Comparative Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1951 [1890]).

material representations and physical evidence for 'progressionist' ideas. Tylor's hypothesis that magic as a way of thinking is followed in evolutionary sequence by religion and finally by science, together with Frazer's concepts of sympathetic, homeopathic and contagious magic, formed the inspiration or justification for many of the collections in question.

The historical anthropologist Stephan Palmié, in his assessment of Wittgenstein's critique of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, argues that both Darwin and Frazer's approaches arose from a 'comparative philology as it emerged from the eighteenth century onward… and received perverse reinforcement from Herbert Spencer's misapplications of evolutionary theory to the social realm'.[116] As Ronald Hutton expounds, the new science of geology 'provided evidence of the ascending scale of life forms' and when 'applied to the development of human culture', folk customs could therefore represent 'cultural fossils…'. A comparison of them could therefore 'provide a general theory of religious development for the human race', as formulated by Tylor, taken up by FLS members and popularised by Frazer. This theory 'promised a way of rescuing the study of popular belief and observance from mere dilettantism and elevating it to the status of a real science' so provided an important impetus for the inclusion of folklore in academia and museums.[117]

Tropes from natural science were transferred to the study of human culture and to the ways in which it was collected, classified and interpreted in museums.

[116] S. Palmié in Wittgenstein, *Golden Bough*, edited by G. da Col and S. Palmié (Chicago: Hau Books, 2018 [1967]), 5.
[117] Hutton, *Moon*, 112. Hutton credits the folklorist Gillian Bennett with this insight.

Material culture was a crucial tool for antiquarians, early anthropologists and folklorists, who collected both tangible and intangible things — from objects, images and words to folk tales, music and dance. Douglas argues that during the 1890s, the 'non-corporeal, intangible' required 'materialization' to render it collectible, for example the accumulation of stone axe 'thunderbolts' showed 'the desire for material confirmation' of what intellectuals characterized as 'superstitious' beliefs. Douglas refers to such collectibles as 'materialized facts' incorporating 'artefactual evidence and its materialized equivalents — transcribed narratives, photographs, and bodily measurements'.[118] Ironically, as the historian Alexandra Walsham points out, the recording of 'vulgar errors' often led to their preservation and revival.[119] At the same time as looking down on elements of popular culture (whether at home or abroad) as 'primitive', attempting to destroy them or declaring them obsolete, collectors also responded to a sense of loss by preserving material evidence for them, later to be revived and re-interpreted by 'actual and cultural descendants' of their original makers and users.[120]

Hutton explains how during the first folk revival, change was associated with urbanisation and stasis with rural life. Rural customs were idealised as timeless relics, practised by insiders who were perceived as ignorant or innocent but in

[118] Douglas, *Material Culture*, i.
[119] A. Walsham, 'Recording Superstition in Early Modern Britain: the origins of folklore', in S. Smith and A. Knight, *Superstition: The Religion of Fools?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 178-206. The phrase 'vulgar errors' was used by Thomas Browne in *Pseudodoxia or Enquiries into very many received tenents and commonly presumed truths* (London, 1646), also known as Browne's *Vulgar Errors*.
[120] This phrase, referring to the rights of people often referred to as 'source communities', is taken from the MA's 'Code of Ethics for Museums', *www.museumsassociation.org/asset_arena/7/17/15717/v0_master.pdf* (London: Museums Association, 2015), 18, para.7.7, accessed 21 Nov. 2018.

need of interpretation and collection by educated outsiders. Hutton roots this tendency in mid-nineteenth century German romanticism, 'with its quest for a unifying national identity', explaining that romantic idealisation of rural England, while spanning the late-eighteenth century until today, peaked between 1880 and 1930.[121] These dates coincide precisely with the time when most material examples of English and international magic entered museums. Romanticism was largely due, argues Hutton, to industrialisation and urbanisation during a century (1810-1910) which began with most English people living in the countryside and ended with the majority living in towns. Urban and rural life came to be seen as polar opposites, with towns as ugly and unhealthy while 'the countryside became credited with all the virtues which were the obverse of those vices'.[122] Amongst collectors of folk magic, we can perceive a tension between both of these attitudes. Walsham puts this clearly when she states that there were two strands in the origins of 'folklore' — the antiquarian impulse to preserve obsolescent ways of life, and the Protestant crusade to stamp out superstitious error; these sometimes co-existed within the same collector, as my case studies will show.

Clearly, collections of English amulets were assembled at a point in the history of museums when the study of human culture, as well as the natural world, came to be defined as science. Professionals like Haddon were careful to differentiate themselves from 'the masses' (whom they wished to educate) by their rational,

[121] Hutton, *Moon*, 112-113. In particular, Hutton acknowledges the Prussian scholar William Mannhardt, who collected contemporary peasant customs between 1860-1880 and developed a theory of pagan 'survivals' which influenced Tylor and Frazer.
[122] Hutton, *Moon,* 117.

scientific credentials, contrasting these with the perceived irrationality of those they studied. One way that they did this was to subsume the heterogeneous collections of others into their own overarching scheme. This process was a key element in the professionalisation of human science, so people who blurred the boundaries — such as Lovett and Toms — constituted a threat to professional credibility. Colleagues had to be vetted — was their curiosity legitimate enough, was their study rigorous enough? Museum professionals worried that their displays could be appreciated by the 'wrong' people and for the 'wrong' reasons, as both Frances Larson and Jude Hill discuss in relation to working-class visitors to Henry Wellcome's museum.[123]

The line between 'amateurs' and 'professionals' changed over time. Until the late-nineteenth and even early-twentieth centuries, the gentleman 'amateur' had a higher social status than the salaried 'professional'.[124] Professionalisation has been closely linked to changes in Britain's class structure. The historian David Cannadine explains that class since the mid-nineteenth century has been more complex than Karl Marx's 'perpetual struggle between landowners, capitalists and labourers for rent, for profit and for wages'. Instead, 'new occupational groups have come into being, which do not easily fit into this three-level mode', including those identified by the historian Harold Perkin as the 'forgotten middle

[123] Hill, 'Story' Larson, *Infinity*.
[124] See M. Bowden , D. A. Mackay and P. Topping (eds.), *From Cornwall to Caithness: Some aspects of British field archaeology: Papers presented to Normal V. Quinnell*, (BAR British Series 209, 1989). They explain for example, that Herbert Toms nursed a grievance because as a professional curator from a relatively humble background, his social status was lower than that of the moneyed amateurs who undertook archaeological field research in his area of Sussex.

class' or the 'non-capitalist or professional class'.[125] Many of the individuals represented in the following case studies (Pitt-Rivers, Tylor and Elworthy) created their collections and displays as amateurs involved in literary and philosophical societies. Their work was already well underway before the emergence of professional academics (Tylor's later career, Haddon) and curators (Balfour, Toms) in anthropology.

The intellectual historian Stefan Collini observes 'the impact of increasing academic specialization upon the voices available for participation in public debate' as the rise of professional academic careers from the 1880s led to the devaluation and exclusion of amateur contributions.[126] More specifically, the historian Philippa Levine explores professionalisation amongst what she defines as the 'three historical communities' of antiquarians, historians and archaeologists.[127] Levine traces how history and archaeology went on to become academic disciplines and recognised professions, while antiquarianism fell from intellectual favour. She explains that 'the method of the antiquarian had been and remained one of collection and classification on a descriptive basis, regardless of chronology and embracing both text and artifact'.[128] Through my case studies, I examine the institutionalisation of material magic in the context of the professionalisation — or otherwise — of curators and academics in a range of disciplines, in the context of the museum as an institutional setting. Museums occupied a significant place in the development of academic disciplines including

[125] D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1998), 9; H. Perkin, *The rise of professional society: England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989), preface.
[126] S. Collini, *Public Moralists: Political thought and intellectual life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 7.
[127] See Levine, *Amateur*, especially Chapter 4.
[128] Levine, *Amateur*, 70-71.

natural history, folklore, anthropology and archaeology, all of which were bound up with shifting conceptions of what constitutes 'science'.[129] During the late-nineteenth century, when many of these disciplines arrived in universities, they were strongly museum-based. Collections of English amulets entered museums, for the most part, during this early 'museum phase' in the human sciences.

In the early-twentieth century the focus of academic study shifted from museums to university departments. History's distinction between those who study material remains (collectors, antiquarians) and those who build a narrative of the past (theoreticians, historians) mirrors the distinction made by mid-twentieth century anthropologists between museum workers and fieldworkers. Frances Larson explains that anthropologists after the First World War 'were increasingly concerned with the study of social relationships rather than collections of objects, and museums were now usually overlooked in favour of intensive study "in the field"'.[130] Palmié characterizes this shift as 'transforming their predecessors' searches for laws of social development into searches for laws of social organization and cultural coherence', that is, a shift from diachronic to synchronic study.[131] Although research no longer focussed on material objects in museum collections, however, anthropologists were still interested in magic, from Marcel Mauss' *General Theory of Magic* at the turn of the century to Bronislaw Malinowski's *Coral Gardens and their Magic* in the

[129] Museology books consulted on this point include Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums*; C. Whitehead, *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines* (London: Duckworth, 2009); M. Bouquet, *Academic Anthropology and the Museum: back to the future* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2001).
[130] F. Larson, 'Anthropological Landscaping: General Pitt Rivers, the Ashmolean, the University Museum and the shaping of an Oxford discipline', *Journal of the History of Collections* (Vol. 20, No. 1, May 2008), 85-100.
[131] Palmié, *Golden Bough*, 5.

1930s.[132] These writers were intent on emphasising the difference between their own (scientific, rational) and others' (magical, irrational) thinking, or in trying to demonstrate that 'others' were, in fact, rational in their own way. Sir Edward Evan (better known as 'E.E.') Evans-Pritchard's 1937 *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* is the classic example of the latter line of thought.[133]

In 1984, Christina Larner commented (in her discussion of early modern European witchcraft) that anthropologists since Frazer have assumed 'not only the homogeneity of primitive and pre-industrial societies but also the homogeneity of modern societies'. Larner concluded that 'there is no such thing as a totally modern, totally scientific society', arguing that 'the artificial polarization of two supposedly symmetrical opposites: the savage and the modern' creates an 'artificial asymmetry'.[134] A decade later, the philosopher Bruno Latour later called for a 'symmetrical anthropology'.[135] Concomitant with the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century academic tendency for identifying 'others' as 'primitive' came an equivalent 'Occidentalism' or stereotyping of 'the West' as purely 'modern'.[136] From such a viewpoint, modern Westerners are expected to be rational and exhibit scientific thinking, non-Westerners are expected to be irrational and exhibit magical thinking. Contentiously, some recent anthropological texts still refer to 'the West',

[132] M. Mauss, *General Theory of Magic* (London: Routledge, 2001 [1902]); B. Malinowsi, *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935).
[133] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).
[134] C. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: the Politics of Popular Belief* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 164, 159 and 161.
[135] B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993 [1991]), 99.
[136] This term was first used by James Carrier in *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), in response to Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* (London: Keegan & Paul, 1978) which explored Western stereotyping of the East.

'Westerners' and 'Western thought' as though they were homogenous. Elizabeth Edwards *et. al.*, for example, repeatedly use the concept of a monolithic 'West', assuming that 'Western' equals 'modern', in their discussion of 'the sensory turn' in material culture studies.[137] These terms not only overlook radical differences within 'Western' society such as class, education and religion; they miss Latour's point that 'we have never been modern'.[138]

Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles note that the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern 'highlights the fundamental difference between Western and the Melanesian presuppositions about social reality, and uses these differences to highlight the manner in which anthropology has approached Melanesia with a Western mindset'.[139] Wingfield comments that 'Strathern's "Europeans" more often than not appear to be anthropologists, and probably only really one anthropologist in particular' (herself).[140] It appears that until recent decades, some theoreticians still needed the idea of a rational, modernist 'West' against which to construct their concepts of 'alterity'. By contrast, recent studies of English magic, witchcraft, popular religion and paganism have challenged the notion that Enlightenment modernity has ever been universally and uniformly

[137] E. Edwards, C. Gosden and R. B. Phillips (eds.), *Sensible Objects: colonialism, museums and material culture* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006).
[138] Latour, *Never been Modern*. This academically popular phrase is the title of Latour's in which he introduced his influential 'actor network theory' (ANT); see Law, J. and J. Hassard (eds.), *Actor Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). Every idea is followed by a counter-idea: see W. Modest, 'We have always been modern: museums, collections and modernity in the Caribbean', *Museum Anthropology* (Vol. 35, No. 1, 2012), 85-96.
[139] C. Gosden and C. Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism: material culture and colonial change* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 5, referring to M. Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988).
[140] Wingfield, *Moving Objects,* 22.

accepted in 'the West'.[141] The concept of 'the great tradition and the little tradition' provides a useful model here for understanding how popular religion and belief rely on objects and rituals, even in societies where intellectual ideology (from Protestantism to science) eschews these.[142] Use of amulets can be understood as part of 'the little tradition' in England, whilst acknowledging that there are multiple 'little traditions' and that these do not belong to one particular class or educational level.

A consideration of modernity must also touch on the related concepts of modernism, non-modernity and post-modernity. Modernity is, or was, characterised by optimism, self-confidence and arrogance — the belief that constant technological and political, scientific and religious 'progress' could solve the problems not just of England, Britain or Europe, but of the world. In the heyday of the British Empire in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, this viewpoint encompassed the assumption that 'Western' ideas were universally applicable, that scientific, technological and medical rationality would cure the world's ills, and that Protestant Christianity would be accepted as a universal religion (or as time went on, that religion would become obsolete altogether). Mass education and literacy would stamp out 'superstition', while 'rational' monotheism would render it obsolete.

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[141] Hutton in *Moon* and D. Waldron in *Sign of the Witch: modernity and the pagan revival* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2008) both explore this issue in relation to the origins of neo-Paganism in nineteenth century Romanticism and earlier.

[142] I learned of this concept from Gananath Obeyesekere's paper 'The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism', *Journal of Asian Studies* (Vol. 12, No. 2, 1963), 129-53, though apparently these catagories were introduced by R. Redfield in *Peasant Society and Culture: an anthropological approach to civilization* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

Alongside these aspirations, however, ran a stream of suspicion and fear that rationality would not prevail. Palmié points towards a temporal shift in perception from Tylor's 'mid-Victorian optimism about anthropology as a "reformer's science"' to Frazer's fears about the precarious nature of 'civilisation', suggesting that Frazer himself 'may well be regarded as one of the unsung heroes of early-twentieth-century modernist "primitivism"'.[143] Frazer graphically described his own fear of 'a solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society' posing 'a standing menace to civilization… a thin crust which may at any one moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below.'[144] Hutton argues that this feeling of precariousness, of balancing 'the dark unreasonable forces beneath and inside rational, science-based, progressive modern culture' extended into many areas of life.[145] He describes 'an interlocking set of visions which were both terrifying and alluring' felt by the 'newly expanded and enriched European social elite, balanced precariously on top of a comparatively impoverished and underprivileged, rapidly growing, and potentially dangerous proletariat'. New evolutionary theories claimed that humans were balanced on an evolutionary pyramid of beasts in a universe devoid of a personal God. On an imperial scale, 'small colonial elites perched upon large native populations which frequently appeared to the former as savage, contemptible, and frightening'. Such themes pervaded early twentieth century thought, rooted in Sigmund Freud's explorations of the unconscious, most famously expounded in *Totem and Taboo*.[146] These fears seemed to come

[143] Palmié, *Golden Bough*, 18 and 4.
[144] Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 218–19, cited by Palmié, *Golden Bough*, 18.
[145] This and subsequent quotes in this paragraph are from Hutton, *Moon,* 125.
[146] Freud, S., *Totem and Taboo: some points of agreement between the mental lives of savages and neurotics* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1960 [1913]).

true in the horrors of the First World War, with its mechanised warfare and disillusionment with modernity.

At the same time, a cultural shift towards 'modernism' (as opposed to 'modernity') embraced the subconscious, irrational and 'primitive'. Clifford explores the growing realisation that 'below (psychologically) and beyond (geographically) any ordinary reality there existed another reality' in which 'others appeared now as serious human alternatives; modern cultural relativism became possible'.[147] This ethos was reflected in contemporary art as well as folklore at home and ethnography overseas. The anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy, discussing the 'Mass-Observation' organisation of the 1930s-1940s, argues that ethnology and surrealism shared 'a common goal: the ethnography of their own people', although 'surrealists saw their work as poetics, and ethnologists saw theirs as science'.[148] A surrealist appreciation of dislocation and fragmentation clashed with an academic impulse to schematise and render comprehensible. Martin Clark and Mark Osterfield, in their introduction to the Tate St. Ives' 2012 exhibition *The Dark Monarch*, consider 'the emergence of Surreal and Neo-Romantic trends in Modern British Art'. They examine 'the links modernity has with notions such as fetishism, the occult, totem, mana and taboo', noting that these are 'often thought of as antithetical to modernism' but 'are here seen to belong to modernity'.[149] Similarly, Judith Noble and Daniel Zamain's recent study of 'occultism, magic and visual culture' points out that many

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[147] Clifford, *Ethnographic Surrealism*, 542.
[148] J. MacClancy, 'Brief Encounter: The Meeting, in Mass-Observation, of British Surrealism and Popular Anthropology', JRAI (Vol. 1, No. 3, Sep. 1995), 509.
[149] M. Clark and M. Osterfield, 'Preface' in M. Bracewell, M. Clark and A. Rowlands, *The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art* (St. Ives: Tate Publishing, 2009), i.

twentieth-century artists consciously acknowledged Western occult traditions and that the 'disenchantment' of modernity has been over-emphasised.[150] In museums, this fascination was openly acknowledged in the mid-twentieth century at the Museum of Witchcraft and its predecessors, explored in Chapter 8.

For a time after the Second World War, it seemed as though the universalising success of science, technology and medicine would render both magic and religion unnecessary. However, the main period of European decolonisation, in the later half of the twentieth century, also affected the self-perception of former colonial powers. Recent re-interpretations of English amulets have been embedded in the post-war era's 'second folk revival'. Postcolonial and postmodern outlooks developed in tandem from the 1950s and 1960s. Even as modernity (the belief that scientific rationality can provide ultimate solutions) peaked in the mid-twentieth century, the seeds of postmodernity (the refusal to admit the possibility of objective truth) had been planted. The colonial experience of encountering 'other' ways of life and thought, and their failure or refusal to fall into line with 'Western' expectations, contributed to this loss of confidence — or gain in open-mindedness. Social scientists began to attempt to study and represent working-class and colonised people on their own terms. Recent academic re-interpretations of colonial-era collections have been motivated by self-conscious desires to break down binary oppositions such as us/them, subject/object, collector/collected, amateur/professional, material/ spiritual and object/text as well as primitive/modern and science/magic/

[150] J. Noble, D. Zamani and G. Subelyté, 'Introduction: The Magic of Art' in D. Zamani, J. Noble and M. Cox (eds.), *Visions of Enchantment: Occultism, Magic and Visual Culture* (Lopen, Somerset: Fulgur Press, 2019), xi.

religion. This context has enabled academic, popular and occultist re-assessments of 'magic'.

In the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, academic trends have grappled with the passing away of universalising theories, such as the certainty that modern science, technology and medicine would solve the world's problems. The realisation that a 'modern' scientific view of the world is a subjective one, as well as the academic desire to understand other 'worldviews' or 'worlds', creates a dilemma for those who try to take 'source community' voices seriously while retaining an academic or scientific perspective.[151] The intellectual attempt to understand different points of view, rather than to subsume the world into a single 'scientific' system, has become an important goal of 'Western thought'.[152] This trend incorporates the current revival of academic interest in English magic, including the rediscovery and redisplay of amulets in museums. The concept of 'taking *x* seriously' has become academically popular in the new millennium. The phrase has been used to tackle subjects which in the past would have been derided as not 'serious' enough for academic study, or to

[151] Anthropologists Amiria Henare *et. al.* have posited that that 'if we are to take others seriously, instead of reducing their articulations to mere 'cultural perspectives' or 'beliefs' (i.e. 'worldviews'), we can conceive them as enunciations of different 'worlds' or 'natures', without having to concede that this is just shorthand for 'worldviews'". Chris Wingfield's review of Henare *et. al.* retorts that 'this argument undermines the original underpinning of anthropology as a subject – the psychic unity of humanity – the principle by which very different forms of human life are possible to understand, at least at some level, by another human'. See A. Henare, M. Holbraad and S. Wastell (eds.), *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically* (London: Routledge, 2007), 12, and C. Wingfield's review of the same in *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (Vol. 21, 2009), 287.

[152] Elements of nineteenth-century political thought were strongly monist, assuming that society could be improved by function according to one unitary system — see for example S. Collini, D. Winch and J. W. Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: a study in nineteenth-century intellectual history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). By contrast, the artist Grayson Perry represents the ultimate postmodern liberal with his slogan 'wear your beliefs lightly', reproduced on merchandise accompanying his exhibition *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* at the British Museum (2011-2012).

be taken seriously on their own terms.[153] Magic is one such subject, having been considered, variously, as atavistic and incompatible with modernity, or trivial. The sociologist Torunn Selberg, in her 2003 paper *Taking Superstition Seriously*, argues that 'one perspective on modernity and religion is that they are perceived as two incompatible phenomena, while modernity and secularisation are considered two aspects of the same process'.[154] The anthropologist Peter Geschiere explains that 'anthropologists have increasingly accepted that in order to understand the power of such beliefs [witchcraft, or angels, or Zen Buddhism], one has at least to take them seriously, rather than categorically declassify them as superstition — that is, as not real'.[155]

One the one hand, 'the West' has been conceptualised as too homogenous; on the other hand, 'the rest' have been imagined as too diverse. Early anthropologists including Tylor and Frazer embraced modernity but understood magic to be a phenomenon common to all humanity. Academics today attempt to 'take magic seriously' as an inherent part of modern life. Recent theorists have been concerned with 'looking for the ceremonial… in all aspects of life', including their own, rather than locating magic and irrationality only in 'others' — their lower class neighbours, colonial subjects or women.[156] Becoming irrational has become a rational response to living in a globalised world where very different 'world-

[153] As far as I have been able to discover, academic publications titled 'taking *x* seriously' began to appear in the early 1990s and continue to be published in 2020.
[154] T. Selberg, 'Taking Superstition Seriously', *Folklore* (Vol. 114, No. 3, Dec. 2003), 301-306. Historians (see for example Porter, *Enlightenment*) have demonstrated that in England at least, this was not the case — the Enlightenment occurred in the context of Protestantism.
[155] P. Geschiere, 'Witchcraft and the State: Cameroon and South Africa: Ambiguities of "Reality" and "superstition"', *Past and Present* (Vol. 199, suppl. 3, 2008), 334.
[156] The quote is from C. Wingfield, *The Moving Objects of the London Missionary Society: an experiment in symmetrical anthropology* (Doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012), 285.

views' or 'worlds' exist in constant contact, conflict, conversation and encounter. Outside of academia, magic and religion — including their use of amulets — show no signs of withering away. Magical thinking continues within 'modernity'. In the twenty-first century, interest in material magic has been rejuvenated alongside the acknowledgement of less rational elements within all humans.

Indeed, Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels argue that modernity cannot exist without complementary 'magic'.[157] In complex societies, they say, attempts are made to separate 'magic' conceptually from 'technology', yet magic 'haunts' modernity.[158] Daniel Miller, in his book *Home Possessions*, has looked at this issue more specifically in relation to people's homes and the material objects they have within them. He establishes a connection between two senses of the word 'possession' — those pertaining to ownership and to haunting — arguing that homes and objects often have residual 'personalities' that prevent their current inhabitants and owners from fully expressing their own, so that 'what we may not be able to fully possess comes to some degree to possess us'.[159] In museums we see a similar phenomenon, when the form of the collections restrict the ways in which they can be interpreted by curators and by audiences, whose prior experience also limits their point of view. By interacting with the objects, images and words that people in the past left behind, we hope in some way to

[157] B. Meyer and P. Pels, *Magic and Modernity: interfaces of revelation and concealment* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2003). For untangling debates about definitions of and relationships between science, magic and religion, I have found the following summaries useful: S. J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Smith and Knight on changing definitions of and attitudes to 'superstition' and related concepts in *Religion of Fools?*.; Waldron in *Sign* provides a précis of strands of thought which have fed into 'the neo-Pagan revival'.

[158] Meyer and Pells, *Magic*.

[159] D. Miller, *Home Possessions: material culture behind closed doors* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 10. Miller suggests that this anthropomorphism is most clearly expressed in the ghost story genre (112).

communicate with them — but in doing so it is difficult not to be 'haunted', in Miller's sense, by the preconceptions those who collected them.

This is the spirit in which terms associated with the supernatural are used by Carol Duncan in *Civilizing Rituals: inside public art museums*,[160] by Mary Bouquet and Nuno Porto in their study of *Science, Magic and Religion: the ritual processes of museum magic*,[161] and by Sharon Macdonald on *Enchantment and its Dilemma* in the same volume. Duncan sees 'the totality of the museum as a stage setting that prompts visitors to enact a performance of some kind', reinforcing certain values and beliefs.[162] Bouquet and Porto, writing ten years later, focus on the consumption or reception of such 'ritual' environments by visitors. Macdonald investigates how 'looking at the museum as a ritual site and exploring the analogy with religious institutions and movements helps to highlight the often delicate interplay between science/authority and magic/enchantment' in museums.[163] This issue remains a real one in circumstances where visitors or 'source communities' believe that the objects themselves hold inherent affective and effective power — whether working-class visitors to Wellcome's museum, or self-defined witches at the MWM.[164]

Academic writing about museums has shifted from assuming that their authority is infallible to asserting the 'agency' of different 'actors' involved in museum

[160] C. Duncan, *Civilising Rituals: inside public art museums* (London: Routledge, 1995).
[161] M. Bouquet and N. Porto, *Science, Magic and Religion: the ritual processes of museum magic* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2005).
[162] Duncan, *Civilising Rituals*, 1-2.
[163] S. Macdonald, 'Enchantment and its Dilemmas', in Bouquet and Porto, *Science,* 224.
[164] Since I began researching this thesis, I have heard about contemporary cases from as far afield as Somerset and Fiji where local communities believe strongly that objects in their local museum have dangerous spiritual powers.

'networks'. These range from people (including source communities, amateur collectors, curators and visitors) to the objects and institutions themselves. Gosden and Larson argue that 'objects collect people' just as people collect objects.[165] The abundant physical presence of Lovett's collections, for example, means that they continue to 'collect' people and increasingly inspire new interpretations, or revive old ones. Byrne *et. al.*, discussing Haddon's collections at the Horniman, point out that because objects in museums outlast the individual people who interact with them, they 'make durable both his own and the agency of these various actors'.[166] Byrne *et. al.* suggest that their approach 'opens up many possibilities for the future exploration of the networks and social relations that both form and are formed by collections', including social history as well as ethnography.[167] The assemblages that form the basis of this study sit precariously between ethnography, social history and folklore, providing an opportunity to take this suggestion forward.

Writing in 2001, the anthropologist and museologist Nicky Levell looks more closely at Haddon's interpretation of material magic from Britain and beyond. Levell argues that the social evolutionary stance taken by his displays instilled a 'racist ideology [which] indirectly served to validate colonial activities', in what she depicts as a rather passive audience.[168] Levell's approach differs markedly from Jude Hill's who, writing several years later about Lovett's English amulets in the Wellcome Collection, emphasises the propensity of audiences to subvert

[165] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 77.
[166] Byrne *et. al*, *Unpacking*, 11.
[167] Byrne *et. al*, *Unpacking*, 3.
[168] Levell, 'llustrating Evolution', 259.

the institutional and curatorial 'message' by making their own interpretations of the displays, based on their own experience.[169] Hill acknowledges the power of 'enchantment' to overcome rationality and the agency of individuals to subvert social expectations. For example, Byrne *et. al.* argue that 'objects themselves can exert agency' by 'captivating and enchanting collectors and the museum-going public, long after they might be assumed to have ceased to have efficacy as collected objects'.[170] The charms and amulets at the centre of this study, then, can be considered 'enchanted' on more than one level. The authors discussed here agree that museum objects can have power over their audiences, but they disagree about what sort of power that is.

Like Carol Duncan's, my study is 'concerned not with the representation of foreign or non-western cultures, but with what… museums say to and about our own culture'.[171] Recent studies of ethnographic collections have paid particular attention to the agency of the people from whom the objects were collected, in balance with those who collected and theorised about them.[172] Analyses have moved away from defining people whose artefacts were collected by museums as passive victims of identity appropriation, towards looking for traces of the source community's influence or 'agency' in the material remnants of colonial

[169] Hill, 'Story'.
[170] Byrne *et. al*, *Unpacking*, 9.
[171] Duncan, *Civilising Rituals*, 1-2.
[172] Classic studies include M. M. Ames, *Museums, the Public and Anthropology: a study in anthropology* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985); M. M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: the anthropology of museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992); S. Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (1989); I. Karp and S. D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: the materiality, politics and poetics of museum display* (Washington, London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); A. E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: museums, material culture and popular imagination in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994).

encounters.[173] Recent studies have also moved away from considering the messages museums intend to put across, to analysing what visitors perceive, acknowledging that there can be disjunctions between these. Museums (or those who manage them) make decisions about who is represented by whom, so by spotlighting collections and their related documentation, we risk highlighting the views of the collectors rather than those of the 'source community' or of visitors. Simply by juxtaposing objects in particular ways, the collectors in question were making value judgments about the people they collected from and about those who would view them.[174]

With the late-nineteenth century emergence of professionalism in new scientific disciplines, intellectuals sought to distance themselves from irrational thought.[175] A great deal of scholarly effort has been expended on attempting to differentiate between magic, religion and science in the modern era, striving to define them and to delineate their boundaries. This can be interpreted in the light of Latour's theories of purification and hybridisation.[176] According to Latour, modernity is characterised by its attempts to classify the world, to

[173] See for example M. G. Simpson, *Making Representations: museums in the post-colonial era* (London: Routledge, 1996); Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*; L. Peers and A. Brown, *Museums and Source Communities* (London: Routledge, 2003); E. Robson, L. Treadwell and C. Gosden, *Who Owns Objects? The ethics and politics of collecting cultural artefacts* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006).

[174] This idea is as old as museum ethnography. Alison Brown *et. al.* point out that in Tylor's view, 'objects could transmit knowledge merely by being placed alongside similar artefacts, and their very materiality promoted an understanding of how they related to objects from other areas and periods' — see A. Brown, J. Coote and C. Gosden, 'Tylor's tongue: material culture, evidence and social networks', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* (Vol. 31, No. 3, 2000), 268.

[175] See, for example, James Webb on Sigmund Freud in *The Occult Establishment* (Illinois: Library Press, 1976) and Tanya Luhrmann on ritual magic in *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: ritual magic in contemporary England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[176] Latour, *Never Been Modern* and *Reassembling the Social: an introduction to actor-network-theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). I have found the following article by the theologian and Catholic cleric Peter J. Leithart useful in understanding Latour's position: 'We Have Never Been Modern', *First Things*, *firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/12/we-have-never-been-modern* (New York: The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 2014), accessed 10 Apr. 2010.

differentiate domains such as nature and culture, or science, magic and religion. Latour argues that despite strenuous attempts to separate categories, in reality 'all of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day' in the 'West' just as they do amongst 'pre-modern' peoples who do not conceptually separate them. One could argue that it is the difficulty of drawing clear boundaries between the natural and supernatural, or the material and immaterial, that makes their differentiation so controversial.

3.3. Magic

In two out of three recent edited volumes on material magic, no definitive definition of 'magic' is attempted. Houlbrook and Armitage pass over the issue, beginning with an *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of magic as 'the power of apparently influencing events by using mysterious or supernatural forces' then allowing contributors to make their own interpretations.[177] Hutton settles for the open-ended phrase 'magic and related ritual practices' in this context, having defined magic at length elsewhere.[178] Of the three, Boschung and Bremmer pay the closest attention to defining 'magic', arguing that 'it is only in the later nineteenth century that magic became opposed to religion, which in its modern meaning is a product of the late-eighteenth century'.[179] Owen Davies, in *Magic: A Very Short Introduction*, declines to offer a definitive definition, instead exploring the many ways in which 'magic, as an idea and a practice, has been understood

[177] Houlbrook and Armitage, *Materiality*, 2.
[178] See for example R. Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003), 98-108.
[179] Boschung and Bremmer, *Materiality*, 11.

and employed over the millennia'.[180] Hutton counters that in the culturally specific context of what we might term 'Western thought', the term 'magic' is historically accurate and appropriate, because magic and religion have been intellectually opposed since Classical times.[181]

In short, the meaning of 'magic' has changed over time. It has been applied by English speakers to apparently comparable phenomena in widely differing cultures. In relation to amulets in England and elsewhere, it has been used as part of a group of associated concepts including folklore, superstition, witchcraft, the supernatural and the irrational. Here I attempt define 'magic' in the way that the people I am writing about would have used it, acknowledging that even within a limited timescale, different people and institutions attributed varied and shifting meanings to the term. In the chapters which follow, I explore how collectors, collecting and the collections themselves have contributed to these changing understandings.

Throughout history, magic has sometimes been taken deadly seriously, at other times treated as trivial. Since the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation and throughout the modern era, an ambivalent attitude has existed in relation to what have more recently been termed 'empowered objects' or 'agentive artefacts'.[182] Fascination has clashed with repulsion, and the religious impulse towards iconoclasm has conflicted with the scientific disposition to collect and

[180] Davies, *Magic*, 2. Davies also gives a detailed historical overview of 'Western' magic through the lense of magical books in *Grimoires*.
[181] Hutton, *Witches, Druids*, 87.
[182] J. Mack used these terms in 'Fetish? Magic Figures in Central Africa', in A. Shelton (ed.), *Fetishism: Visualising Power and Desire* (London: Lund Humphreys, 1995), 58; Douglas*, Material Folklore*, 105.

classify. Prior to the modern era, magic was taken very seriously indeed, as a continuation of the traditions of the Biblical Magi.[183] The term 'low magic' was first applied to folk practices by 'high' magicians of the eighteenth century occult revival, perhaps attempting to disassociate themselves from less 'serious' folk practices. The amulets in question generally fall into the high magicians' category of 'low magic', which Hutton defines as 'those practices that fell within the broad category of magic but were not part of their self-consciously learned tradition'.[184]

Religious disputes internal to England have shaped collections and their interpretation. To early modern Catholics who conducted the seventeenth century witch trials, witchcraft was real and its power derived from demonic sources that threatened to undermine Christian civilisation in the cosmic struggle between God and Satan. However, current academic consensus tells us that folk magic was not perceived as being opposed to Christianity by the people who practiced it. The historian Eamon Duffy argues that for the pre-Reformation era in Europe it is not 'helpful or accurate to talk of the religion of the average fifteenth-century parishioner as magical, superstitious or semi-pagan'.[185] Hutton has recently argued that in early modern Britain, Christian ideas about ritual magic mingled with folk practices to produce particular local conceptions of demonic witchcraft and reactions to them.[186] In popular belief, witches were

[183] Waldron explains that 'the civilizations from which this ancient and esoteric knowledge was perceived to originate' shifted over time (*Sign*, 111). In the nineteenth century, Eliphas Lévi continued to uphold this tradition in *The History of Magic* (London: W. Rider & Son, 1860).
[184] Hutton, *Moon*, 84.
[185] E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992), 2.
[186] Hutton, *Witch*.

suspected of causing death and misfortune to people, livestock and crops, while practitioners of folk magic — cunning folk and charmers, or 'service magicians' as Hutton calls them — would provide charms against witchcraft and for the identification of witches. They and their customers perceived themselves to be Christian. However, Owen Davies explains that from the Reformation onwards, the Church of England saw 'popish superstition' and 'magic' as one and the same, both to be suppressed.[187] Eighteenth century antiquarian collectors interpreted amulets as remnants of ancient Roman paganism and medieval Catholicism, contrasting these with their own Protestant ideal. Having been feared as evidence of witchcraft and devilry, charms and amulets were transformed into objects of derision, curiosity and nostalgia, of antiquarian interest but neither valuable nor exotic enough to merit inclusion in the earliest curiosity cabinets or museums. Many examples of such charms and amulets can be found in the collections with which this study is concerned, whereas material evidence for malevolent witchcraft is much scarcer.

Davies explains that from the early-nineteenth century onwards, popular magic was decreasingly associated with diabolism and increasingly compared with those referred to as 'heathens' and 'pagans' encountered by missionaries and other travellers through British colonial expansion. Instead of magic being feared, 'the collection of popular customs and beliefs became a popular middle- and upper-class pastime, and was seen by many as an exercise in recording the vestiges of a more "primitive" stage of human development'.[188] As we have seen,

[187] Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 35-36.
[188] Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 52.

proponents of the emergent human sciences took magic seriously, defining it as a significant stage in the evolution of religious and scientific thought, while simultaneously disparaging it as obsolescent and irrational. Magic was not only taken seriously but also collected seriously, resulting in the vast material archives that we find in museums today. At this time, science and (Protestant) Christianity were seen as congruent, while the perceived association of the material or 'superstitious' side of Catholicism with magic is reflected by the presence of religious imagery in amulet collections. For late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century collectors, the ostensible paganism of English magic and amulets — religious or otherwise — was fundamental to their interest in these objects. Hutton explains that Tylor and Frazer were both 'lapsed Christians from radical Protestant backgrounds' giving them both 'an evangelical Protestant loathing for religious ritual and ornamentation, and for priesthood', arguing that Tylor was 'a Puritan teacher, reclad as a Victorian liberal humanist'.[189] This tendency is reflected in museum collections, which place magic and amulets, including Catholic material, on the lowest rung of the ladder of religious evolution. As intellectuals aspired to scientific rationality and 'rational' religion, popular magical practices were debunked in the hope that this would encourage their demise.

Writing in 2003, Hutton explores ways in which 'magic' has been defined, before adopting his own working definition of religion, which is 'broadly that established in the nineteenth century most notably by Sir Edward Tylor' — that is, 'a belief in the existence of spiritual beings who are in some measure

[189] Hutton, *Moon*, 114.

responsible for the cosmos, and in need of humans to form relationships with them in which they are accorded some respect'.[190] Hutton explains that such definitions would have been 'fairly uncontroversial' for the first two thirds of the twentieth century, when 'there was a broad spectrum of agreement over what the distinction between religion and magic actually was' (among intellectuals, at least), largely based on that of Frazer. In Frazer's words, 'all a writer can do is, first, to say clearly what he means by religion, and afterwards, to employ the word consistently throughout his work'.[191] In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer compares and contrasts magic with both science and religion, arguing that

> in so far as religion assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion, it stands in fundamental antagonism to magic as well as to science, both of which take for granted that the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically.[192]

Hutton explores and dismisses ways in which this 'traditional definition' of magic has been challenged since the 1960s, mainly by anthropologists from Evans-Pritchard onwards. Basically they argued, from a postcolonial point of view, that it was too culturally specific.[193] These complications of terminology and definition are thoroughly discussed by contributors to S.A. Smith and Alan Knight's edited volume *The Religion of Fools*? *Superstition Past and Present.*[194] The crux of the matter lies in whether we are trying fit our subjects of study into

[190] Hutton, *Witches, Druids,* 106.
[191] Frazer, *Golden Bough,* 222.
[192] Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 224.
[193] Hutton, *Witches, Druids*, 99-106.
[194] Smith and Knight, *Religion of Fools*.

an externally imposed structure, or to get to grips with a multiplicity of insiders' worldviews or worlds. Charms and amulets have not always been referred to as 'magical', whether by their original makers and users, by intermediary collectors, or by curators and theoreticians. The case studies which follow highlight whether the people who made and used these objects thought that they were practicing 'magic'; whether collectors thought that they were collecting 'magic', 'folklore', 'superstition', 'custom' or the 'supernatural'; and what visitors who see these objects in museums imagine that they represent.

Douglas and Hutton come to similar conclusions about the value of using two previously unfashionable words, 'folklore' and 'magic', respectively. Douglas informs us that he questioned using the term 'folklore' for vernacular culture but found that collections and other source materials, or 'datasets' as he refers to them, 'cannot be understood without continued reference to the term itself' because things were 'amassed, created, and couched under this idiom'.[195] Similarly, Hutton retains the word 'magic', pointing out that 'the standard twentieth-century definition of magic, and contrast between it and religion, retained considerable vitality at the end of the [twentieth] century, despite attempts to reject and replace it'.[196] Likewise, I suggest that the category of collections I am studying is not arbitrary, but clearly bounded and collected over a specific time period by a variety of people, in different media, for different reasons, using different words to define it. I have therefore tried to clarify what 'magic' meant to the people who created those groupings. Hutton argues that

[195] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 244.
[196] Hutton, *Witches, Druids,* 103.

medieval peasants were not 'pagan' if they considered themselves to be Christian;[197] similarly, if makers and users of amulets considered their objects and practices to be religious, we cannot call them 'magical' from an insider's point of view. I justify my own use of the term 'magic' because my main period of study is exactly that during which the 'broad consensus' about its meaning was developed, accepted and then challenged, and the collections around which my study orbits formed an important part of this process.

The present study is academically relevant because since the late-twentieth century, the contentious concept of 'magic' has once again been taken seriously, as academics in various fields seek to demonstrate that 'we have never been modern'.[198] As early as 1992, George W. Stocking used the term provocatively in his history of anthropology, *The Ethnographer's Magic*, in which he began to collapse the perceived chasm between 'them' and 'us'.[199] This blurring of the boundaries between what counts as 'magical' or 'modern' (and what does not) has grown alongside postmodernity (or late modernity, or nonmodernity) and the acknowledgement of irrationality within supposedly 'rational' people and societies. Academic wordsmiths grapple with trying to verbalise subjective and irrational elements of lived experience — the material world, the senses, the emotions, and things that should perhaps (ethically) be left unsaid — using

[197] R. Hutton, 'How Pagan Were Medieval English Peasants?', *Folklore* (London, Taylor and Francis; Vol. 122, No. 3, Dec. 2011), 235-249.
[198] Latour, *Never Been Modern*.
[199] G. W. Stocking, *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

objective and rational words, and are aware of the ironies and contradictions involved.[200]

Throughout the period in question, certain sorts of artefacts were repeatedly gathered together in collections, in catalogues, in writing and in displays. Collectors themselves wrote about 'magic', from Haddon's *Magic and Fetishism* to Lovett's *Magic in Modern London*.[201] To the institutional collectors and curators who comprise our 'source community' for the purposes of this study, 'magic' and 'religion' were separate and opposing categories. Theoreticians (prominently Tylor and Frazer) as well as collectors and curators (notably Pitt-Rivers, Balfour and Haddon) justified associating these objects because of their perceived place in an evolutionary progression from magic to religion to science.[202] I suggest that the term 'magic' has at least three different levels of meaning. These include the multiple meanings it can have to its various practitioners; its 'standard' meaning, explained above, used by those who have intellectualised and collected it; and a metaphorical meaning, the 'alchemy' through which museums, academia and enthusiasts continually facilitate cultural transformations. My thesis title refers primarily to 'magic' in the second sense. It makes sense to use the word 'magic' here because of its significance to the intellectual frameworks within which these collections were assembled.

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[200] This line of enquiry is technically known as 'phenomenology'. On the senses, for example, see M. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: a particular history of the senses* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Edwards *et. al., Sensible Objects*; on the emotions, a conference held at the Institute of Historical Research, 'Emotional Objects: Touching Emotions in History', *emotionalobjects.wordpress.com /2013/11/* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2013), accessed 7th May 2017; on the contradictions involved see Wingfield, *Moving Objects*, 23.

[201] A. C. Haddon, *Magic and Fetishism* (London: Constable, 1906); E. Lovett, *Magic in Modern London* (Croydon: printed at the *Advertiser* offices, 1925).

[202] See Tylor, *Primitive Culture*; Frazer, *Golden Bough*; Pitt-Rivers, 'Typological Museums, as exemplified by the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and his provincial museum in Farnham, Dorset', *Journal of the Society of Arts* (Vol. 40, 1891), 115-122; Haddon, *Magic*, amongst their other works.

3.4. Materiality

Here, I review recent theoretical approaches to material culture, materiality and materialisation, assessing how these can inform, and be informed by, the study of English amulets in museums. Active collecting of English amulets by museums is closely linked to changing academic attitudes to the material world as well as to magic. Within the past decade or more, academic interest in European, British and English collections within anthropology museums has resurged as part of the 'material turn' which developed in academia from the 1980s onwards.[203] Material culture studies — including museology — has burgeoned since then, but with a different emphasis from that of its Victorian and Edwardian forebears, focusing instead on the agency of objects in social networks and change.

Three seminal theoretical approaches in material culture studies have been Arjun Appadurai's on 'the social life of things', Alfred Gell's on the agency and power of objects, and Bruno Latour's 'actor-network theory'.[204] The 'social lives' of the objects in question began before they caught the interest of collectors, and have continued since they entered museums. Orvar Löfgren tracks rising and

[203] Postgraduate courses in museum studies, material culture and museum ethnography proliferated simultaneously. Susan Pearce (ed.) provides a comprehensive overview of early developments in *Museums, Objects and Collections: a cultural study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992). The Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester was set up in the early 1970s. The Material Culture department at University College London (UCL) was founded in the early 1990s and the *Journal of Material Culture* was launched in 1996.

[204] A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); A. Gell, 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', in J. Coote and A. Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 41-63; Latour, *Never Been Modern*. The field of material culture studies has been summarised many times; see, for example, V. Buchli (ed.), *The Material Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

falling interest in material culture by folklorists specifically, explaining that 'everyday interaction with objects has been a classic theme for folklorists, folklife researchers, and European ethnologists'.[205] Löfgren concludes that 'during recent years the concept of *materiality* has been used more widely [than 'material culture'] as it describes an open dimension in cultural processes rather than delineating a category of objects'.[206] Douglas uses a similar approach to explain how folkloric 'facts' are rendered material and collectible.[207]

Objects can appear to provide a direct connection with people in the past for at least two reasons; they can inspire a feeling of immediate physical connection with their original makers or users, and their preservation can seem more fortuitous than that of words or photographs, which have been more obviously created as deliberate records.[208] Löfgren demonstrates that Swedish folklorists during the first folk revival displayed 'a strong interest in the forgotten or seemingly unimportant', including objects as well as 'folk literature and beliefs'. Despite folklorists' attempts at salvage, however, Löfgren notes that in retrospect we can see that 'these collections mirror a selective framework' with regards to 'what was regarded as important to collect and preserve for future generations, and what was ignored and overlooked'. Turning then to the 1980s, after what he

[205] O. Löfgren, 'Material Culture', in R. F. and G. Hasan-Rokem, *A companion to folklore* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 169. The situation has been similar for archaeologists but not, until the 'material turn', for anthropologists.
[206] Löfgren, 'Material Culture', 170, acknowledges the following as key works in these debates: D. Miller, *Materiality* (London: Duke University Press, 2005); C. Tilley (ed.), *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage, 2006); T. Ingold, 'Materials against Materiality', *Archaeological Dialogues* (Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007), 1-16.
[207] Douglas, *Material Culture*.
[208] For example, W. Denton and E.M.F. Denton contended that psychosensitive people can literally get in touch with people from the past through physical contact with their objects in *The Soul of Things; or, psychometric researches and discoveries* (Wellesley, Massachusets: Denton, 1888), cited by the anthropologist and curator Michael O'Hanlon in 'Mostly harmless? Missionaries, Administrators and Material Culture on the Coast of British New Guinea', *JRAI* (Vol. 5, No. 3, 1999), 377-397.

refers to as 'the moratorium on material studies', Löfgren explains that 'a renewed interest in the materiality of everyday life was evident in European ethnology and folklore as well as in anthropology, sociology and cultural studies', but with a focus on consumption rather than production. Löfgren notes a more recent emphasis on the importance of 'the haptic dimension (touching)' to balance 'the dominance of sight or "ocular-centric" approach', arguing that 'looking at all the senses at work — not just the visual dimension — means not only studying what people do to objects, but what objects do to people'.[209] This academic emphasis on what was previously ignored and overlooked incorporates the senses, emotions and diverse points of view as well as materiality and magic. This cultural context has allowed for the current upsurge of academic interest in material magic.

In the late-twentieth century, studies of colonial-era ethnographic collections moved towards trying to identify the agency of 'source communities' in their formation, rather than assuming that European collectors had free choice in what to collect. Later studies have taken a more 'symmetrical' view, considering how the exchange of objects transforms each party. Gosden and Larson examine how the flow of objects can help us to understand these relationships, as they explore in relation to a range of collections at the PRM, arguing that new hybrid cultural forms arise when different cultures meet.[210] They make the point that patterns of acquisition at the PRM have been influenced both by people within the museum (academics and curators) and those without (field and secondary

[209] Löfgren, 'Material Culture', 170, 172, 173.
[210] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*.

collectors, as well as source community members). In Gosden and Larson's view, the objects themselves could be said to have agency, because 'particular kinds of objects led scholars and adventurers out into the world along specific routes and with specific interests in mind'.[211] In the case in hand, the kinds of objects were charms and amulets, and the interest was the place of magic in cultural evolution. Similarly Douglas, examining exchange networks in late-nineteenth century British folklore collecting, concludes that 'material culture is a vital historical resource. When understood and examined in terms of its relational and social qualities, and the contexts and processes of its collection, it harbours potential to shed light on a whole range of complex and subtle negotiations'.[212]

People, institutions and objects are among the range of entities that can be considered to have 'agency'. The extent to which objects have power or agency in themselves, or whether their power rests in the words and images, people and actions that surround them, is a matter of debate. Gosden and Knowles, in their study of how objects mediated historical change in colonial New Guinea, make clear that 'things are not agents in their own right, and the material world is only given force and significance through human activity. On the other hand, things are not a passive stage setting to human action… but any use of the active voice when describing objects must be suspect'.[213] Although this is true from a scientific 'worldview', it could be argued that for those whose 'world' is magical, these objects literally have agency.

[211] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 102.
[212] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 247.
[213] Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*, 22-23.

Gosden and Knowles point to the agency of the collecting process in shaping the parts of the world from which things were collected, the people who collected them and the people from whom they were collected, proposing that

> there are three basic models of historical change employed to understand the meeting of initially different cultures through colonial relations. Acculturation sees the local culture as being taken over and submerged by the culture of the incoming group… The second possibility sees a lack of change and a maintenance of tradition… The third, most subtle, view of change stresses hybridity as an outcome whereby new cultural forms arise out of the meeting of existing cultural logics.[214]

Marilyn Strathern, they argue, represents the first approach, Nicholas Thomas with his concept of 'entangled objects' the second, and themselves the third. Gosden and Knowles conclude that 'such change has not brought convergence or acculturation but has created new forms of difference'.[215] If we accept that 'Western' culture is as complex as Melanesian culture, and apply Gosden and Knowles' approach to English history, we can see that when scholarly opinion collides with popular conceptions, new 'hybrids' or sub-cultural forms are created. If collections of amulets are created through a series of confluences between collectors and the people whose objects they collect, we can discover something of those relationships by studying the resulting collections. For example by exploring amulets at the MWM, I examine mechanisms through

[214] Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*, 5.
[215] Strathern, *Gender*; Thomas, N. Thomas, *Entangled Objects: exchange, material culture, and colonialism in the Pacific* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991); Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism,* 5.

which colonial-era collections of English amulets have become active agents in creating new cultural forms (Chapter 8).

A further stream of thought in material culture studies concerns the form of power that inheres in material things. Gell contended that extraordinary human skill, as captured in the aesthetic properties of objects, gives them agency, or power over the ways in which people behave.[216] Bell and Geismar explain that 'Gell's argument for the agency of things has pushed anthropologists to approach artefacts from the perspective of what they *do* in social networks and not what they represent. Material forms are "prosthetic" augmentations or "distributed objects" through which social agency is extended and exerted' beyond individual human beings.[217] Gell's thinking is a useful starting point for considering ways in which objects themselves have been thought to have power. Frazer's theory of 'sympathetic magic' linked the physical form of objects with their perceived effectiveness to curse or cure. Collectors inspired by his theories in turn extended Frazer's agency — whether wittingly or unwittingly — through their collections, by collecting objects whose form corresponded to their use (such as the 'mole's foot carried for cramp' shown in *figure 2.1 c*). The agency of collectors — Lovett, for example — is also extended through their collections (Chapter 6).

In 'magical thinking', the magician's will is extended through an object, or the spirit in an object has power, or the object and the power are one and the

[216] Gell, 'Technology', 41-63. I will not pursue more recent critiques of Gell's theory here, but acknowledge those by C. Pinney and N. Thomas (eds.), *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the technologies of enchantment* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); papers in Henare *et. al., Thinking*; L. Chua, and M. Elliott (eds.), *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2013).
[217] Bell and Geismar, 'Materialising Oceania', 16.

same.[218] In the anthropologist Michael Taussig's analysis, power invested in a shaman's objects mimics a parallel spiritual power.[219] The sociologist Max Weber argued that certain objects have 'charismatic' power, stating that 'not every stone can serve as a fetish, a source of magical power'. He contends that 'our modern views of nature… distinguish objectively… those attributes of causality which are "correct" from those which are "fallacious"', whereas 'the person performing the magical act… will instead distinguish between the greater or lesser ordinariness of the phenomena in question'. Weber distinguished between two kinds of charisma, that which 'inheres in an object or person on virtue of natural endowment' and that which 'may be produced artificially in an object or person through some extraordinary means'.[220] Wingfield asks of the former category, 'what force there is in these objects that makes their viewers respond to them?'[221] Whereas Wingfield focuses on charismatic objects resembling human bodies, and Gell on those embodying extraordinary skill in their making, the objects considered in this thesis are precisely Weber's 'stones'. Many of the amulets surveyed are neither made nor physically modified by humans. They could scarcely be described as 'art' or even as 'artefacts'. Thus, their alleged power cannot be attributed to any technological enchantment in Gell's sense, they do not have human qualities like the figural sculptures discussed by Wingfield, and many of them have none of the physically

[218] M. Holbraad's paper 'The power of powder', in Henare et. al., *Thinking*, has formed a starting point for recent discussions about the latter scenario.
[219] Taussig, *Mimesis*.
[220] M. Weber, *The Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968 [1922]), 400.
[221] Wingfield, *Moving Objects*, 261. Wingfield also discusses the charismatic properties of human figural representations in 'Touching the Buddha: encounters with a charismatic object' in S.Dudley (ed.) *Museum Materialities: objects, engagements, interpretations* (London and New York: Routledge), 53-70.

sympathetic attributes that Frazer looked for.[222] Some, such as holed stones or fossilised sea urchins, have the 'natural endowment' of their curious form. Others, from unremarkable stones to mass-produced charms, must have their charisma 'produced artificially', if only by the 'extraordinary means' of concealing them in one's pocket. It seems that any object can have amuletic power.

3.5. Conclusion to Chapter 3

Chapter 2 provided a solid base of material evidence for the subject matter of this thesis. Chapter 3 has situated the data in historical and theoretical context in order to demonstrate its academic relevance in the twenty-first century. In outlining these wider historical and academic debates and themes, I have pointed towards some 'discursive fields' in which English amulets have become 'entangled'.[223] In the remaining chapters I will attempt to situate a number of case studies within the historical and theoretical contexts outlined in here, developing these themes in relation to the growth and development of institutionalization and professionalisation in the human sciences, and to changing attitudes to magic and to the material world in academia and museums.

The thesis examines how material magic can be understood 'in terms of its relational and social qualities' pertaining to inter- and intra-cultural encounters within England itself. These encounters, exchanges and relationships encompass

[222] See Gell, 'Technology'; Frazer, *Golden Bough*.
[223] The terms quoted here are taken from M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970) and Thomas, *Entangled Objects*.

a wide range of 'complex and subtle negotiations' between different groups, with concomitant potential for the 'alchemical' transformation of objects, people and ideas, for revelation and concealment, for understanding and misunderstanding, translation and incommensurability between them.[224] Social groups involved include the makers, users and collectors of English amulets, believers in magic and sceptics, 'common people' and educated élites, amateurs and professionals, Catholics and Protestants, colonising and colonised peoples, museum curators and visitors. The interplay of concealment and revelation is a recurring theme in magic, in museums, and in colonial power relations.[225] Patterns in collecting and interpreting English amulets reveal conflicting impulses to preserve, destroy or re-invent elements of English identity, through the medium of objects.

Rather than being extinguished, the power of amulets was thought by their collectors to be safely contained in museums.[226] Instead, they continue to have 'agency' within museum contexts; but, as magical objects, their 'agency' can be construed as different from that of more 'secular' or 'utilitarian' artefacts. What happens, then, when we re-insert English amulets into the history of museums and studies of materiality? What sort of power is ascribed to which sort of objects and by whom? What can a study of these things conceal and reveal about the different people who have made, used and understood them in different ways? What can the processes through which they have changed hands, and been preserved and destroyed, tell us about the relationships between different

[224] The quoted phrase here is from Douglas, *Material Culture*, 247.
[225] This theme recurs in debates from Foucault, *Order of Things* to Taussig, *Mimesis* and beyond.
[226] Museologist Sandra Dudley has addressed the specifically material qualities of museums in the following volumes: *Museum Materialities*; *Museum Objects: experiencing the properties of things* (ed., London: Routledge, 2012); *The Thing About Museums: objects and experience, representation and contestation* (*et. al.*, eds., London: Routledge, 2012).

groups of people and how they have influenced each other? The following case studies explore these questions, applying the theoretical approaches outlined above while situating the collections in their historical contexts.

CHAPTER 4. Materialising magic at the Pitt Rivers Museum

General Pitt-Rivers and the FLS were the immediate sources of two parallel streams of artefacts, feeding into the amulets and folklore collections at the PRM and MAA respectively. The present chapter takes as its starting point the stream with Pitt-Rivers at its source. This fed into what was to become the biggest collection of English amulets, with its long-lasting and consistently visible legacy in the PRM's magic and amulets display. The collection is perhaps the best known in Britain; it has also been invested with the most academic significance. The PRM's current displays include six of the first objects of English folk magic known to have entered a public museum, as part of Pitt Rivers' founding collection. These comprise four Christian medallions, a 'witch post' 'belonging to a seat on a hearth of an old house in Scarborough', and a 'naturally perforated stone, nailed to a cottage door against witches by a carter Rushmore nr Salisbury'.[227] The holed stone (*figure 4.2 a-b*) from the Wiltshire-Dorset border is one of the PRM's better-documented English amulets. It was subjected to detailed study as part of *The Other Within* project, from which we learn that

> 1884.56.3 is an object, described by a museum worker as a 'stone with natural perforation, found fixed on a nail to the cottage-door of Kimber, a carter in General Pitt Rivers' employment, to keep away witches'. This is particularly interesting as it must have been acquired between 1880, when Pitt Rivers first inherited the Rushmore estate, and 5 April 1881

[227] PRM 1884.56.3, PRM 1884.56.80. The latter is currently shown in a separate display case on witchcraft.

> when he sent the stone to South Kensington Museum (where his collection was then displayed).[228]

This short paragraph tells us a lot about the object — the name, gender, profession and class of the original user; how, where and when he used it, and what he used it for (as filtered through the words of the field collector); the fact that it was part of Pitt-Rivers' original collection, with which it was displayed in the Bethnal Green Museum (where it is likely to have been part of his 'Human Superstition' display) prior to its transfer to Oxford.[229] From *The Other Within*, we also learn that the stone later attracted the interest of a succession of museum workers and has been documented a number of times, but in each instance repeating the information originally provided, without making any substantive additions.[230] We remain reliant on the information recorded by the field collector. It is evident that the presence of this particular stone in the museum is due to Pitt-Rivers' own circumstances and relationships, but several questions remain unanswered: was the stone inherited or found by the carter's family? Was it Kimber the carter, or perhaps his wife, who decided to fix the stone cottage door? Did Pitt-Rivers acquire it directly from the carter or through an intermediary, field collector or 'middleman'? Did Pitt-Rivers pay for the stone or was it given as a gift? Did Kimber or his family part with it willingly or with reluctance? How strong was their belief in witchcraft and the power of the stone

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[228] Petch, A., 'Dorset hag-stone 1884.56.3', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/object-biography-index/19-prmcollection/70-dorset-hag-stone-1884563.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2008), accessed 15 May 2016

[229] Chapman, W. R., *Ethnology in the Museum: A.H.L.F. Pitt-Rivers (1827–1900) and the Institutional Foundations of British Anthropology* (Doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1981).

[230] These instances are listed by A. Petch, 'A Dorset hag stone', *England: The Other Within*, *england. prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Dorset-hag-stone.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 11 Oct. 2017.

to protect against it? Here, I explore the historical context through which this stone — and other English amulets in Pitt-Rivers' founding collection — made their journey to the PRM, as well as the subsequent development of the museum's magic and amulets collections up until the Second World War.

I have noted that 'magic' can have metaphorical meanings, referring to the 'alchemy' that continuously transforms the significance that people attach to objects and their experiences of visiting museums. The PRM was an outcome of what one might call early 'alchemical experiments' in mixing magic, material culture and scientific study in an institutional setting. As we shall see, Pitt-Rivers himself experimented with this mix in London during decades preceding the PRM's opening in 1884. The definitions of and boundaries between magic, religion and science were fundamental to early anthropological theorists including Pitt-Rivers, Tylor and Frazer. However, as with alchemy in its original sense, the intended outcome — in their case a comprehensive, material proof of human cultural evolution — was never reached.

4.1. Recent research at the PRM

A centre of research in itself, the PRM has one of Britain's most intensely studied museum collections. Recent projects have looked into what can be learned from patterns of collecting at the museum up until 1945, namely *The Relational Museum* (2002-2006)*, England: The Other Within* (2006-2009), *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers* (2009-2012) with its spin-off *Excavating Pitt-Rivers* (2012-present) which focused on Pitt-Rivers' archaeology collections, and *Small Blessings: Animating*

the Pitt Rivers' Amulet Collection (2012), which looked at international charms, amulets and talismans specifically.[231] All of these projects examine relationships between people and how these are materialised and mediated through objects in the museum. Although it does not discuss magic or amulets specifically, the *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers* website provides enough relevant information to make it clear that Pitt-Rivers himself must be considered among the numerous 'agencies' that have formed the PRM's collections and displays of amulets. The focus of *Small Blessings* was to catalogue, understand and make accessible 'a major collection of amulets that the Wellcome transferred to the PRM, of religious and folkloric amulets collected by the French ethnologist Adrien de Mortillet more than a century ago and acquired by Sir Henry Wellcome before its transfer to Oxford'.[232] As a smaller-scale project focusing on documentation and public access, *Small Blessings* leaves many questions unanswered, not least the historical collecting context of the particular collection it addresses.

The Relational Museum website is a useful resource for thinking about institutional agency in the form of the University of Oxford, the PRM itself and the learned societies of which many of the collectors were members, as well as individual human agency. One of the project's major outcomes is *Knowing Things,*

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[231] PRM, 'The website of " "The Relational Museum" project 2002-2006', *www.history.prm.ox.ac.uk* (Oxford: PRM, 2006); Petch, A., C. Wingfield and C. Gosden, 'England: The Other Within', *www.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness.html* (Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum, 2006); A. Petch, 'Rethinking Pitt Rivers: analysing the activities of a nineteenth-century collector', *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/* (Oxford: PRM, 2013), all accessed 27 Aug. 2013; PRM, 'Excavating Pitt-Rivers', *www.prm.ox.ac.uk/excavating-pitt-rivers.html* (Oxford: PRM, no date), accessed 9 Oct. 2017; See 'What is an amulet?', *Small Blessings: Amulets at the Pitt Rivers Museum*, *www.prm.ox.ac.uk/smallblessings.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2012), accessed 27 Aug. 2013.

[232] De Mortillet (1853-1931) lectured at the School of Anthropology in Paris. In 1831 he 'sold his large amulet collection to the Wellcome Museum in London. The collection was transferred to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1985'. This information is from PRM, 'Adrian de Mortillet', *Small Blessings: Amulets at the Pitt Rivers Museum*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/amulets/index.php/home-de-mortillet/* (Oxford: PRM, 2012), accessed 1 Feb. 2015.

a book which provides detailed analysis of seven individuals who had particular significance to the museum in that they contributed the largest number of objects to the collection.[233] Four of these people — Pitt-Rivers, Tylor, Balfour and Blackwood — were also key figures in the formation of the magic and amulets collections and displays at the PRM, while the others (the colonial administrator John Hutton and the anthropologists Charles and Brenda Seligman) were significant contributing collectors. This chapter will look again at Tylor, Pitt-Rivers and Balfour, but with a different emphasis — their interest in and contributions to collecting material magic at the PRM. Blackwood's post-war contribution will be explored in a Chapter 7.

Finally, *The Other Within* limits itself to the PRM's own collection in its formative years (from the 1880s until the Second World War) and to things that were made in England, but encompasses both supernatural and secular material.[234] Of its 36 featured 'object biographies', at least ten can be construed as having magical properties, whether to protect or to harm. The holed stone from Dorset described above, for example, is displayed as part of a 'series' of cabinets containing charms, amulets, and other items that have been defined as 'magical' by people who have contributed to creating the museum.[235]

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[233] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*. Project-related publications also include C. Gosden, F. Larson and A. Petch, 'Origins and Survivals - Tylor, Balfour and the Pitt Rivers Museum and their Role within Anthropology in Oxford 1883–1905' in Rivière (ed.), *History of Anthropology*; C. Gosden, A. Petch and D. Zeitlyn, 'Social Networks and the Creation of the Pitt Rivers Museum', *Journal of Material Culture* (Vol. 12, No. 3, Nov. 2007), 211-239.

[234] PRM, 'Project Details', *digital.humanities.ox.ac.uk/project/other-within-analysing-english-collections-pitt-rivers-museum* (Oxford: PRM, 2015), accessed 1 Feb. 2016.

[235] Two further well-studied examples are described by H. Richardson, 'Slug on a thorn', *England: The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-slug-on-a-thorn.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009) and C. Wingfield, 'Tylor's Onion: a curious case of bewitched onions from Somerset', *England: The Other Within, england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-tylors-onion.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), both accessed 1 Feb. 2016.

4.2. Displays and collections review

At the PRM, English amulets have been subsumed into a physical and theoretical framework that encompasses the whole world. The current magic and amulets display is typical of the museum's object-rich, densely packed presentation style. It occupies a prominent position on the ground floor in a run of eight traditional display cases, topped with glass vitrines and with multiple drawers underneath, filled with objects in 'visible storage' (*figure 4.1 a*). Each cabinet is devoted to one theme or part of the world. The displays' appearance gives the impression that they have remained unchanged since their inception, but this belies the complexity of their formation. Gosden and Larson, although they do not discuss the amulets display specifically, comment that it is 'surprisingly difficult' to know what a visitor would have seen displayed at the PRM 'even in the 1900s' — there are few archival photographs or notes that give such information.[236]

The museum's worldwide collection of 'charms' and 'amulets' and its 'magic and amulets' display have flourished and grown since 1884. Its stored material includes collections transferred *en masse* to the museum long after the Second World War, while its displays today combine Pitt-Rivers' physical 'series' with those inspired by Tylor's ideas about the evolution of magic into religion and science. Perhaps surprisingly, there are only five objects of English magic in the display — the aforementioned holed stone from Dorset, three Yorkshire rowan tree loops against witchcraft, and a Sussex 'witch bottle' donated by the

[236] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 22.

Egyptologist, archaeologist and folklorist Margaret Murray (1863-1963) in 1926 (*figure 4.1 b*).[237] The rowan loops, donated by John Christopher Atkinson in 1893, were amongst the first English amulets to arrive at the PRM after the General's founding collection. Murray's bottle, accessioned in 1926, is one of the museum's most well known and instantly recognisable — even defining — objects, often appearing on postcards, in publications and online, as well as taking pride-of-place in the Ashmolean's 2018 *Spellbound* exhibition.

Table 6 outlines the contents of the PRM's global magic and amulets display, listing its thematic, geographical and temporal emphases.[238] The display contains a total of 636 accessions, just under 6% of nearly 11,500 objects with the keyword 'amulet' or the description 'charm' on the PRM's catalogue database.[239] Just 13 of these were from Pitt-Rivers' founding collection, all of which he had also exhibited at Bethnal Green and South Kensington. The objects within the main run of cases were accessioned between 1884 and 2000. Conversely, just over 10% were accessioned after Balfour died in 1939, suggesting that he was largely responsible for overseeing the acquisitions that form these displays. Geographically, over 45% of the objects are Asian, with just over 30% from Europe and just under 23% from Africa, Oceania and the

[237] PRM 1884.56.3, *PRM 1926.6.4* and PRM 1893.18.1 respectively.
[238] The data in the table is based on information exported from the PRM's database in 2014.
[239] Cases 26-31 form a continuous run while cases 32-33 are separated by an aisle. The present study considers only the main run of eight magic and amulets cases. The museum contains a great many more international 'magical' objects within its archaeology and anthropology collections. There are also three further display cases containing objects relating specifically to British and European magic — 'Magic and Witchcraft', 'Toys & Games' (which includes tarot cards) and 'Divination'.

Americas combined.[240] These proportions suggest that the original emphasis of the 'series' was to understand material from Asia and Europe by placing it in comparative context. The 'series' still appears to follow a roughly evolutionary approach, in that the run of display cases begins on the left with aboriginal Australia and ends on the right with Europe, an arrangement which was presumably intended to demonstrate an evolutionary progression from cultures then considered to be 'primitive' to those considered to be 'civilised'. The figures suggest that the initial impetus for the display came from the General himself but that it was built on exponentially in later years.[241]

The PRM's displays as a whole were originally conceived to demonstrate Pitt-Rivers' theory that the evolution of technology reveals the evolution of the human mind. In this context, objects which would have had unique and personal meanings to their makers and users were transformed into props for a unifying academic idea, that of magic as an obsolete survival in the evolution of religion and science. Gosden and Larson explain that for each region of the world, 'religion' is well represented numerically in the PRM's collections, exceeded only by 'tools', 'weapons' and 'beads'. Notably, 'magic' is not listed as a separate category in their analysis, but is subsumed within 'religion', thus sidestepping long-running disputes about the relative definitions of each. The authors of *Knowing Things* also comment that 'the fuzzy boundary between physical and

[240] As of 2014, 179 Italian charms made up a high proportion of the European amulets on display. Of the Asian displays, the majority were from India (88 items), including 42 votive offerings from Tamil Nadu, for which Balfour himself is listed as the source.

[241] For each object in Pitt-Rivers' founding collection, the catalogue notes that 'Pitt-Rivers sent this object to Bethnal Green Museum for display, as part of the first batch of objects sent there, probably in 1874' and that they were 'displayed in Bethnal Green and South Kensington Museums (V&A)' before being 'transferred from South Kensington Museum [to Oxford] in 1884'.

spiritual well-being is evident in the common overlap between medicine and religion at the Museum'. They describe how both Pitt-Rivers and Balfour arranged artefacts into 'scientific' series illustrating cultural evolution through the juxtaposition of material forms and explain that 'the vast majority of the Museum's collections were arranged according to type, and, if not, then into themed groups like magic, divination, or religion rather than provenance'.[242]

We have an immediate source name for most of the objects in the PRM's international magic and amulets displays — that is, we know from whom the museum obtained them directly. Just 12 individuals or family groups gave or sold more than ten items, making up just over half (55)% of the displays; single objects and smaller groups are attributed to over 120 further sources, including a number of well-known academics such as Murray, Evans-Pritchard, the Seligmans and Andrew Lang, as well as many other people about whom little more is known. For the majority of the objects, the field collector is assumed to have been the same person as the museum's source. Information about the objects' original makers and users, on the other hand, is vanishingly small. The PRM's database gives field collection information for just a few of the objects on display, including the Dorset holed stone. It is clear from this absence of information that the museum as an institution was more interested in the physical objects themselves than the context in which they were used or collected. In *Knowing Things*, Gosden and Larson argue that 'Pitt-Rivers, Tylor, and Balfour, in their different ways, each promoted material culture as an intellectual resource: objects were reliable evidence for distant, intangible

[242] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 205-209, 210, 101, 113.

customs and beliefs'.[243] It must be acknowledged, however, that these three men were dependent on the agency of unseen, sparsely recorded 'source communities', as well as to intermediary collectors for both objects and knowledge about them, and to lesser-known museum workers and volunteers for incorporating them into the museum's systems of documentation and storage. They were also beholden to visitors to bring their own interpretations to the displays which they saw.

4.3. Pitt Rivers in historical context

Here I examine the extent to which the PRM's displays on magic and collections of amulets were instigated by the General himself. Pitt-Rivers' ambition was that his private collection would become a public museum demonstrating his theories of cultural evolution evidenced in material form, which he eventually achieved in the PRM, although the museum's collections have grown and its displays have changed since then. Between 1850 (the year before the Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace) and 1884 (the year that the PRM opened), the General amassed over almost 20,000 objects. His first collection was exhibited at the Bethnal Green Museum from 1872 and then the South Kensington Museum from 1875, both of which later formed the V&A, before being transferred to Oxford in 1884. His similarly sized 'second collection', amassed between 1880 and 1900, formed his private museum in Farnham, Dorset until its dispersal in 1960.[244] The General was also indirectly responsible for the presence of significant amulets

[243] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 88, 9.
[244] A. Petch, 'Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900)', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/* (Oxford: PRM, 2015), accessed 24 Jul. 2016.

collections in provincial museums elsewhere in England, through his protégés Toms and St George Gray, explored Chapter 6. The preservation of material magic in museums has, therefore, been widely influenced by Pitt-Rivers' 'extended agency'.

Pitt-Rivers' collections and displays were part of a broader cultural concern with natural and social evolution. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, during the decade when Pitt-Rivers started collecting.[245] Tylor's *Primitive Culture* and Darwin's *The Descent of Man* were both published in 1871.[246] In the following year, Pitt-Rivers opened his first exhibition, so he and Tylor are likely to have come into contact by this time, given that they were working in parallel on related themes.[247] Pitt-Rivers' Bethnal Green displays of 1872 are said to have been 'the first fruits of the earliest systematic attempt to apply the theory of evolution to the products of human handiwork' and included what appears to have been the first time that objects of popular magic were displayed together in public.[248] Items like these did not form part of the mid-eighteenth century British Museum or the 1851 Great Exhibition, which aimed to show off Britain's supposed greatness and its Empire to the nation and the world. It was not until Pitt-Rivers exhibited them at the V&A's predecessors, which themselves had their origins in the Great Exhibition, that they received serious scientific interest.

[245] C. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species. Or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life* (London: John Murray, 1859).
[246] C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and selection in relation to sex life* (London: John Murray, 1871).
[247] Jeremy Coote's report from the MEG's 2011 annual conference on the theme of 'Words and Objects' suggests that further research 'to compare and contrast Pitt-Rivers's activities with those of his key contemporaries' would be fruitful; see also A. Petch, '"Rethinking Pitt-Rivers" Colloquium', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/ progress-reports-index/11-projectreports/284-rethinking-pitt-rivers-first-workshop.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2011), accessed 2 Feb. 2016. Here, I make a small start on this project in relation to English amulets.
[248] A. H. L. F. Pitt-Rivers (ed. J. L. Myers, with an introduction by Henry Balfour), *The Evolution of Culture and other essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), i.

This chapter will examine why this should be the case, as well as reviewing more recent academic interest which the collection has inspired.

The British Empire's rapid expansion in the mid-nineteenth century led to an increase in ethnographic collecting more broadly, and Pitt-Rivers' wealth meant that he was able to take advantage of this situation to expand his collection. Like other intellectuals of his time his work centred on scholarly societies. He was influential in the formation of anthropological institutions including the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) and the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (AI, later RAI), serving as President of both.[249] He joined the FLS in 1885 and was appointed one of its four vice-presidents from 1890.[250] George Stocking's examination of the origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) distinguishes between what he refers to as 'three different anthropological traditions' competing in the mid-nineteenth century, namely 'the old "ethnologists" of Quaker-Evangelical humanitarian background; the radically racialist and in most cases marginally scientific "anthropologists"; and the Darwinians… socially advanced, but closely tied to the scientific establishment of their day'.[251] Pitt-Rivers, with his Anglican background, belonged to the latter group.

[249] See D. Hix, 'Augustus Lane Fox and the Anthropological Institute', *Excavating Pitt-Rivers*, *excavatingpittrivers.blogspot.co.uk*, accessed 2 Feb. 2016.
[250] A. Petch, 'Pitt-Rivers and the Folklore Society', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/379-pitt-rivers-and-the-folklore-society.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 8 Jul. 2017.
[251] G. Stocking, 'What's in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71)', *Man* (New Series, Vol. 6, No. 3, Sep., 1971), 384.

Connections between social evolutionism and ethnographic collecting can be traced back to the 1830s, the decade in which Darwin's account of his H.M.S. *Beagle* voyage was first published.[252] Stocking explains that following on from the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act which abolished slavery in most British colonies, in 1837 the Aborigines Protection Society (APS) was founded with its humanitarian and religious aim of 'protecting the defenceless, and promoting the advancement of uncivilised tribes'.[253] Ethnographic collecting was an important part of the APS' crusade, with its aim to collect and disseminate what it referred to as 'authentic information' concerning their 'character, habits, and wants'. Collections were thought to foster understanding, leading to the humane treatment of peoples subject to British rule. Stocking explains that the APS aspired 'not to halt European colonisation overseas, but to change its character'.[254] The Society's philanthropic and purely 'scientific' interests soon became separated, however, the latter becoming the chief concern the Ethnological Society of London (ESL), founded in 1843.

The Society split again in 1863, one branch forming the Anthropological Society of London (ASL). This separation can be viewed in the context of differences of opinion with regards to the monogenesis or polygenesis of humankind — that is, whether humans originated as one or more species. The ESL and ASL differed in their mode of study well as in their approaches to the issue of race, engaging in

[252] C. Darwin, *Voyages of the* Adventure *and* Beagle*,* Vol. III (London: Henry Colburn), 1939.
[253] The Aborigines Protection Society (APS I899: 8-9).
[254] Stocking, 'Name?', 370, citing APS I837a, 4.

'arguments over the unity or plurality of races'.[255] From the 1840s onwards, Stocking explains, 'ethnologists' used a wide range of physical, linguistic, archaeological and cultural data, while 'anthropologists' considered only physical evidence in the form of comparative anatomy. 'Anthropologists' looked at (synchronic) differences between contemporary people, while 'ethnologists' were interested in reconstructing the (diachronic) evolutionary origins of physical and cultural variation. The ESL initially took a humanitarian, missionary and anti-slavery stance, whereas the ASL's position was, in Stocking's words, 'archetypical of the traditional racist view of Blacks' and 'even suggested that all men [*sic*] were not members of the same species'. The ESL aspired to separate 'science' from politics and religion, and Stocking states that 'having rejected in the I840's the left hand of philanthropy, it rejected in the 1860's the right hand of political racism'. Pitt-Rivers and Tylor, among others including the leading Darwinians Thomas Henry Huxley and John Lubbock, were active members of the ESL and later presidents of the AI. Pitt-Rivers was involved in negotiations leading to the ESL and ASL finally merging to form the AI (later RAI) in 1871.

Pitt-Rivers is perhaps best known for his archaeological work as well as his museum. Evolutionary theories were also fundamental to the development of archaeology. In 1849 the antiquarian William Thoms, having conceived the term 'folk-lore' three years earlier, effectively introduced the archaeological 'three age system' (stone, bronze and iron ages) to England. This, claims Stocking, would 'help bring order and method into the "imperfectly developed field" of British

[255] The quotes in this paragraph are from Stocking, 'Name?', 374-378, referring to W. Thoms, *The Primeval Antiquities of Denmark by J. J. Worsaac, translated and applied to the illustration of similar remains in England* (London: J. H. Barker, I849: iii, x.

antiquities'.[256] For ethnology, Stocking explains, 'the impact of the new antiquarian work was to link together "prehistoric" Europeans and contemporary savages'.[257] The evolutionary tradition to which Pitt-Rivers belonged was 'interested in the developmental problem posed by the discovery of prehistoric human remains in the context of Darwinian biological evolutionism' with the 'historical problem of relating all human groups to a single original root'. Pitt-Rivers described his collections using racial terms, and Stocking points out that he 'spoke of their utility in determining the issue of "the MONOGENESIS or POLYGENESIS of certain arts"', that is, the question of diffusion or independent invention of cultural traits. Pitt-Rivers considered his collections to be material evidence for the worldwide evolution of human culture and 'the human mind'. His English amulets were collected and first displayed as part of an evolutionary sequence on a par with his displays on subjects about which he wrote more and for which he is better known — weaponry and fire-making.

In the mid-nineteenth century, then, cultural evolutionism represented a progressive liberal attitude, acknowledging that all human beings have shared origins as well as equal developmental potential. As Ronald Hutton explains, 'the geological model suggested that the minds of all humans worked in essentially the same way, but had developed at different rates, according to culture and class, along the same linear track'.[258] Hutton emphasises that despite the

[256] Stocking, 'Name?', 374, referring to W. Thoms, *The Primeval Antiquities of Denmark by J. J. Worsaae, translated and applied to the illustration of similar remains in England* (London: J. H. Barker, I849: iii, x.
[257] This and subsequent quotes are from Stocking, 'Name?', 375, 384 and 385-386.
[258] This and the next quote are from Hutton, *Moon*, 112 and 120.

negative terminology used by Tylor and Frazer to refer to their subjects, 'they took care to emphasize that humanity represented a single family, of which barbarism and savagery were the childhood'. In Stocking's words, for a cultural evolutionist such as Pitt-Rivers, 'the similarity of independent inventions the world over was evidence for the "psychic unity of mankind"'.[259] Nevertheless, David Livingstone maintains that Pitt-Rivers' displays, by their insistence on gradual change, 'reflected his conservative political values and a wider societal fear of radical change or revolution' characteristic of the privileged classes at this time.[260]

4.4. Pitt-Rivers: a gentleman amateur

Pitt-Rivers' scientific engagement with material things, as an archaeologist, collector and curator, is well known.[261] Here, I argue that the original impetus for the PRM's well-known display of its magic and amulets 'series' began with Pitt-Rivers in the context of the cultural background described above. He was a scientist and scholar as well as a collector, publishing over 100 books and papers under his original name Lane Fox as well as his assumed name Pitt-Rivers, most of which are about weapons, tools and his typological classification system.[262] His reputation is that of a highly rational man, his military background reflected

[259] Stocking, 'Name?', 385.
[260] Livingstone, *Science,* 34-35.
[261] Levell provides a useful introduction to how Pitt-Rivers' ideas were inspired by Darwin, Spencer and the Great Exhibition in 'Illustrating Evolution', 261.
[262] These were written between 1880 and his death in 1900 — see A. Petch, 'Bibliography', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/bibliography.html*, (Oxford: PRM, 2011), accessed 27 Nov. 2018.

in his preoccupation with the development or 'evolution' of weapons.[263] His underlying interest was in the development of the human mind, and he intended his collection to demonstrate that 'amongst the arts of existing people in all stages of civilisation, we are able to trace a succession of ideas from the simple to the complex'.[264] Nevertheless, the examples about which he wrote are weapons and tools of stone and bone, rather than objects of magic or religion.[265]

Given that Pitt-Rivers collected magical and religious artefacts but wrote little about them, did his collections reflect an interest in less tangible aspects of culture (such as magic and religion) as well as more material technologies (like tools and weapons), or did he simply include this series for the sake of comprehensive coverage of human culture? Alison Petch explains that little is known about his religious beliefs (if any), but concludes that because of the cultural context in which he lived, 'a loose adherence to Christianity is, therefore, inferred if not proven'. Petch writes that 'like many scientists of the Victorian age he had a very enquiring mind, which refused to discount issues without examination' — one of which was spiritualism — and that he 'had a strong

[263] See J. Coote and A. Petch (eds.), 'Rethinking Pitt-Rivers and his Legacy' *Museum History Journal* (Special Issue, Vol. 7, No. 2, Jul. 2014), 155-167.
[264] A. H. Lane Fox, 'On the principles of classification adopted in the arrangement of his anthropological collection, now exhibited in the Bethnal Green Museum', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (Vol. 4, 1875), 307.
[265] Pitt-Rivers' publications do not touch on these subjects apart from his 'Account of a human heart in a case found in Christ's Church, Cork', *Archaeological Journal* (Vol. 24, 1866), 71-72. See also A. H. Lane Fox, [later Pitt-Rivers], *Catalogue of the Anthropological Collection lent by Colonel Lane Fox for exhibition in the Bethnal Green Branch of the South Kensington Museum June 1874 Parts I and II.* (London: Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education HMSO, 1874); 'Principles of Classification'; 'Typological Museums'. His posthumously published collection of essays *The Evolution of Culture* focuses on tools and weapons. His archival papers classified under *Religions* mainly comprise notes on and copies of published material on worldwide and ancient religions. These are listed at PRM, 'Pitt-Rivers Papers', *www.prm.ox.ac.uk/manuscripts/pittriverspapers.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2014), accessed 10 Jul. 2016.

interest in the supernatural from the 1860s (if not before)'.[266] Aside from this reference, Pitt-Rivers' interest in magic and amulets is only attested by his collections. Petch notes that 'many of the artefacts in his collection deemed to relate to death [in the PRM's current classification system] were classified by Pitt-Rivers as "religious emblems" but later, after transfer to the ownership of the PRM, were often classified as "charms and magic"'.[267] This classification, then, is the museum's and not his own.

Museum displays today are the outcome of long processes of intervention by generations of museum workers, as well as representing just a small proportion of a museum's collections. Here, I consider the part that magical artefacts played in Pitt-Rivers' founding collection, and the extent to which today's magic and amulets displays and collections are based on — or shaped by — his. Although the PRM has (with caveats) followed the General's original typological scheme, his founding collection comprises only a small proportion (under 4%) of the material the museum now holds. Just 4.5% of his founding collection has been primarily classified as 'religious' in the PRM's current cataloguing system, and an even smaller proportion as 'magic'.[268] Over 420 'amulets' were acquired as part

[266] A. Petch, 'Pitt-Rivers and spiritualism*', England: The Other Within*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/735-pitt-rivers-and-spiritualism/* (Oxford: PRM, 2010), accessed 24 Jul. 2016. Petch refers to G. W. Stocking, 'Animism in Theory and Practice: E.B. Tylor's Unpublished "Notes on Spiritualism"', *Man* (New Series Vol. 6, No. 1, 1971), 88-104, explaining that he 'drew attention to the reference in Edward Burnett Tylor's diaries to Fox [later Pitt-Rivers] attending a séance…'.

[267] A. Petch, 'Death-related artefacts in Pitt-Rivers collections', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/275-death-a-pitt-rivers/index.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2010), accessed 22 Apr. 2013.

[268] These figures are based on data in the PRM's online collections database. Religion is the eighth most represented category in Pitt-Rivers' first collection, in which tools and weapons dominate, followed by vessels and pottery sherds. A search of Pitt-Rivers' founding collections available on the PRM's *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers* website brings up the following totals: in the first collection there are 243 objects classified as 'amulet', 232 as 'charm' and 192 as 'magic', with 178, 179 and

of the founding collection, including excavated as well as contemporary material. These include examples from around the world: West African war charms, amulets from Mexico, Tibet and China, and ex-voto 'religious offerings' from Brittany. This situation indicates some continuity between Pitt-Rivers' first displays and those that we see today, although we cannot confirm whether the items have been displayed continuously.

Pitt-Rivers' first and second collections as a whole were 'dominated by items from Europe', with the UK and Ireland represented by the greatest number of objects although, according to Gosden and Larson's detailed research, a large proportion of these are stone tools.[269] Whereas for Tylor, the lowest form of human development was most aptly represented by magical beliefs, for Pitt-Rivers it was represented in a more concrete form — that of stone tools. The *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers* website includes detailed 'biographies' of objects in the founding collection and out of 21 pertaining to English, British or European material, just three have obvious links with magic. Of these, the two English examples are 'Votive Rags from England' and the Dorset holed stone mentioned above. There is also a 'human heart in a heart shaped cist from Ireland', which, according to project contributor Eric Edwards, 'was originally sent to Bethnal Green Museum as the centre-piece of a 'Human Superstition' display'.[270] Pitt-

179 respectively for the second collection. All three categories seem to have been applied to the same sets of objects. Both sites were accessed on 22 Apr. 2013.

[269] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 94.

[270] PRM 1884.57.18, see E. Edwards, 'Object biographies', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/ rpr/index.php/objectbiographies/75-human-heart-in-a-heart-shaped-cist-18845718/index.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2010), accessed 10 June 2016; see also Chapman, *Ethnology*. Pitt-Rivers wrote about this object specifically (Lane Fox, 'Account of a human heart'), but no such artefact appears in the 'Blue Book' which lists his collections. It is not entirely clear whether the 'idols series' and the 'human superstitions' displays at Bethnal Green were one and the same.

Rivers was interested in England, Britain and Europe, it seems, but did not choose to illustrate these places primarily through supernatural themes.

Pitt-Rivers himself did not use the term 'magic' to describe this series or other items in his collection. His Bethnal Green displays included a 'series' on 'idols and objects connected with religion' in which amulets and other magical items were displayed. The 148 items in this series are listed in Pitt-Rivers' manuscript *Blue Book* and incorporate a familiar range of ancient and modern items from all over the world, which are mirrored by the range of amulets currently on display at the PRM. They range from what he referred to as 'African fetishes' and 'Hindoo idols' to British and European Christian material. The abstract nouns 'magic', 'religion' and even 'superstition' do not appear in Pitt-Rivers' list; rather, he describes the items using the more concrete nouns 'amulet', 'charm', 'idol', 'fetish', 'relic', 'votive offering' and 'pilgrim's token', without apparently making or discussing a specific distinction between 'magic' and 'religion'.[271] For Pitt-Rivers, 'idols and religious emblems' was just another sub-category of human 'objects illustrating the development of prehistoric and savage culture' alongside, for example, 'personal ornament' or 'modes of navigation'.[272] Although magic and religion were not major preoccupations for Pitt-Rivers as they were for Tylor, documentary and archival material makes it clear that the PRM's 'series' of international magic and amulets was initiated by Pitt-Rivers himself, although it grew vastly after he relinquished personal control over it. If just 2% of the

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The widespread distinction made between 'religion' and 'magic' would suggest that they were probably not, but as mentioned above, Pitt-Rivers himself did not always draw this distinction.

[271] For a list of Pitt-Rivers' Bethnal Green displays see A. Petch, 'Idols Series', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, web.*prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/382-idols-series.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2011), accessed 10 Jun. 2016.

[272] These sub-categories are listed in Lane Fox, 'Principles of Classification', 293.

objects now on display were Pitt-Rivers', then how and for what reasons did the remaining 98% arrive at the museum?

4.5. Tylor: an amateur and a professional

The final resting place of Pitt-Rivers' collection — in Oxford rather than London or Cambridge, at the University Museum rather than the Ashmolean — was by no means a foregone conclusion. The arrival of both of Pitt-Rivers' collection and Tylor at Oxford were both part of complex processes whereby Oxford academics negotiated the status of anthropology within the University and its classification as a science. For Tylor, already an established anthropologist who had known Pitt-Rivers since at least the 1860s, it provided leverage to help him gain his first academic position.[273] Tylor was appointed Keeper of the University Museum in 1883 and, together with the anatomist Henry Nottidge Moseley (1844-1891), was responsible for transferring Pitt-Rivers' collection from London, its installation and 'the development of the ethnography collections'.[274] Tylor was already in his fifties by this time and had published several anthropological and archaeological publications including his most famous book, *Primitive Culture*, over a decade before, so his ideas on magic were fully formed when he became involved in founding the PRM. Gosden and Larson note that as a Quaker, he had previously been denied a university education and 'forced to undertake scholarly research and writing outside an institution'.[275] His appointment as Reader in

[273] This is discussed in detail by Larson in 'Anthropological Landscaping'.
[274] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 159-160.
[275] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 76. The 1871 Universities Tests Act first allowed Roman Catholics, Protestant non-conformists and non-Christians to be appointed to university posts.

Anthropology in 1884 (the year that the PRM opened) was Britain's first university position in the subject.[276]

Unlike Pitt-Rivers, whose interest in the subject was peripheral, Tylor in *Primitive Culture* placed magic at the very roots of human cultural development, forming the basis of both religion and science.[277] His social evolutionary theories were profoundly based in the material world, with human bodily experience forming the basis of all human thought and activity — for example, he argued that the idea of the soul, hence religion, had its origin in dreams. However, his interest in magic extended beyond the material world and travelled close to home. Gosden and Larson discuss his interest in 'the supernatural', explaining that he was 'interested in the possibility that objects might wield power over the human mind in specific, ritualized circumstances', and that both Tylor and Pitt-Rivers pursued a 'scientific' interest in spiritualism, which led them to attend séances.[278] The cultural historian Jay Winter explains that autokinesis, automatic writing and séances 'were treated as serious scientific matters by a variety of eminent writers, scholars, and public figures' at this time.[279] The boundaries drawn between rationality and irrationality were different from those of today. Tylor may have conceded that material objects used in ritual can have psychological effects, but would not have agreed with practitioners of magic that objects themselves, with or without the addition of human effort, could directly

[276] A. Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 215, referring to W. R. Chapman, 'Arranging Ethnology: A. H. L. F. Pitt-Rivers and the typological tradition', in G. W. Stocking, *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
[277] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.
[278] Tylor 'undertook a month's "fieldwork" among a spiritualist group in London in November 1872' and tried water-divining (Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 78, referring to G. W. Stocking, 'Animism', 88-104.
[279] J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 55.

affect the world. Even for sceptics like the individuals in our discussion, however, the possibility of a 'psychic force' had not yet been dismissed from serious scientific investigation.

Tylor was actively, personally engaged with magic in its material form, collecting objects as a basis for his theoretical perspectives. The PRM's collections contain 118 worldwide amulets sourced from Tylor and his family, of which 33 were on display in the magic and amulets series at the time of my survey. The anthropologist Amiria Henare argues that over time, Tylor's academic interests moved away from material things and that by 1888 he had 'turned his attentions from material culture to questions of religion and mythology, much to Pitt-Rivers' chagrin' — in other words, from matter to mind.[280] In Henare's words, there were at this time 'ongoing tensions between language- and object-based methods and epistemologies'. Tylor's interest in objects and the material world was more philosophical from the outset, rather than requiring the hands-on engagement with objects that Pitt-Rivers' and Balfour's approaches espoused.

4.6. Balfour: a professional curator

The PRM's first curator, Henry Balfour was — like Tylor and Pitt-Rivers — a key agent in the formation and presentation of the magic and amulets collection. His career was closely intertwined with those of Tylor, Pitt-Rivers and Haddon. But if Pitt-Rivers collected material things but was only marginally interested in magic and religion, and Tylor was intellectually interested in magic but decreasingly in material things, what were Balfour's contributions to the collection and display

[280] This and the next quote are from Henare, *Museums*, 216.

of magic and amulets? Larson informs us that he gave the second highest number of objects to the museum after Pitt-Rivers himself, as well as field-collecting the largest number; she argues that 'as far as the collections are concerned, Balfour and the Pitt Rivers Museum were often indistinguishable'.[281] Nevertheless, until the PRM's recent research projects, Balfour had attracted less academic attention than Pitt-Rivers or Tylor, probably because of his reputation as a data gatherer rather than a theoretician. Gosden and Larson contrast Balfour with Tylor, positing that the latter's 'work with objects supported and fuelled his broader intellectual ambitions, but, unlike for Balfour, it was never an end in itself'. Larson suggests that perhaps Tylor 'did not feel quite so comfortable dealing with the tangible world of *things*… despite his intellectual interest in ethnographic artefacts' while Balfour 'took up the reins at the Pitt Rivers'.[282]

We have seen that the emerging human sciences at this time took inspiration from natural sciences. Like a number of other anthropologists and folklorists of his generation, including Haddon, Balfour started out as a natural historian before developing an interest in the 'human arts'.[283] His Oxford University degree in Natural Sciences incorporated studying natural objects at the University Museum. Larson points out that as a student he 'acquired the skills of scientific observation and analysis that he would later apply to cultural artefacts'

[281] See F. Larson, 'The Invention of Museum Anthropology 1850-1920', *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/sma/index.php/articles/article-index/337-henry-balfour.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2012), accessed 29 Jul. 2016. From Wingfield we learn that Balfour 'was the source of material for 104 acquisition events of English material between 1884 and his death in 1939. This is the greatest number and a considerable outlier in the distribution' ('Donors, Loaners', 129).
[282] Larson, 'Anatomy', 95.
[283] The biographical information here is from the following sources: Chapman, Ethnology; Larson, *Invention*; A. C. Haddon, 'Henry Balfour, 1863-1939', *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* (Vol. 3, No. 8, 1940), 108–126; H. La Rue, 'Balfour, Henry (1863–1939)', in L. Goldman (ed.), ODNB (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); J. H. Hutton, 'Balfour, Henry 1863-1939', ODNB (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001-2004).

as a curator.[284] His first graduate job, from 1885, was to assist Moseley to install Pitt-Rivers' collection at the PRM; he was appointed curator in 1890 and remained in the post for the rest of his life. He was appointed Professor of Ethnology in 1935, when he was in his seventies and just a few years before he died. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society and served as President of numerous scholarly societies including the RAI, the Anthropological Section (H) of the BAAS, the Museums Association (MA), the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS, founded in 1849, in which both Tylor and Elworthy were also involved). As a student, says Larson, Balfour 'probably' attended Tylor's anthropology lectures, and he obtained his position at the PRM through Tylor's influence. Nevertheless, it was Balfour — not Tylor — who created the PRM's physical displays.[285]

After the founding collection, the PRM's next accessions of English amulets were in 1893, presumably in response to Tylor's call for collecting at the FLS's 1891 International Folk-Lore Congress (further explored in Chapter 5). Three early accessions acquired from Frederick Elworthy serve to exemplify the sort of material that Balfour added to Pitt-Rivers' original collection, as well as the variety of ways in which it was interpreted. A mummified ancient Egyptian ibis, donated by Elworthy in 1894, was originally displayed with a label saying it 'represent[ed] the Moon God, Thoth'. In 1898, 'harvest trophies' shown at the 1891 Congress and in 1902 two Wellington wool-combs were accessioned.[286] The former are classified in the museum's detailed 'amulets card catalogue'

[284] Larson, 'Anatomy', 93.
[285] Larson, *Invention*.
[286] MoS 1898.29.1-3, MoS 1902.59.1.1-2.

under several categories including 'Crop Fertility' and 'Offerings to the Gods', while the latter were considered of interest because they had been 'obsolete for about 50 years'. In these three accessions alone, we can see echoes of three folkloric preoccupations: solar and lunar deities (after the philologist and 'scientist of religion' Max Müller), agricultural fertility rites (after Frazer) and the salvage of rural survivals (after Tylor). These objects are on display today but with updated labels, placing them in the particular contexts of their respective societies.

Further notable acquisitions of English amulets during Balfour's curatorship include 18 purchased directly from Lovett in 1909 and 1911.[287] The PRM was among the first museums to purchase an English amulet from Lovett. This was not a contemporary amulet but one more typically of interest to antiquarians, an 'Elizabethan gold "touch-piece" given by the sovereign to a person to cure the "King's evil"' (tuberculosis, known as scrofula).[288] A further 23 amulets were bequeathed through Tylor's wife and daughter after he died in 1917, and a total of 11 donated sporadically by Balfour himself, between 1893 and 1933. It is clear from my survey that primary collecting waned after the First World War, although English amulets occasionally entered the PRM's collections both before and after Balfour died in 1939.

[287] The PRM purchased a further 17 English amulets from Lovett in December 1911, mainly comprising natural objects for the maintenance of health, including a Devon dried frog to cure fits and a Sussex mole's foot to guard against cramp (PRM 1911.75.14 and PRM 1911.75.17 respectively). Also purchased from Lovett in 1911 was a 'sheep's heart stuck with pins and nails (model) as formerly used in S. Devon for "breaking evil spells"'. It is striking that this anti-witchcraft device is a model, supposedly illustrating past rather than contemporary practice (PRM 1911.75.1). It was not until 1968 that a further 417 of Lovett's English amulets were transferred to the PRM from the former WHMM (see Larson, 'Anatomy', 93).
[288] PRM 1909.60.1.

Balfour's theoretical and practical approaches to material culture and collecting have been analysed in *Knowing Things* and in Larson's detailed biography.[289] His career depended on Pitt-Rivers' collection and he continued to use the latter's typological methods of classification and display. Pitt-Rivers was adamant that these should be followed by his successor, and Balfour in turn saw this continuity as his responsibility.[290] Like Pitt-Rivers, Balfour aimed to collect comparative, evolutionary series of objects to illustrate human development. Balfour was academically trained and thought of himself as a scientist but in Haddon's opinion, he was simply 'ably carrying on the methods of Pitt-Rivers' rather than making any great innovations of his own'.[291] Three elements sum up Balfour's work: the weight he accorded to data over theory, the importance he gave to studying objects as opposed to people, and his method of collecting through survey and contacts rather than fieldwork and sustained relationships. These emphases were typical of the time at which he trained but also indicate why his work became unfashionable in his later years.

Herle notes that Balfour 'regularly compared notes with' Haddon, 'who had similar interests' including salvage ethnography and scientific classification systems. Like Haddon, Balfour was a traveller, fieldworker and writer as well as a curator; it would be easy to see them as Oxford and Cambridge equivalents, but

[289] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*; Larson, *Invention*.
[290] A. H. L. F. Pitt-Rivers, 'Typological Museums, as exemplified by the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford and his provincial museum in Farnham, Dorset', *Journal of the Society of Arts* (Vol. 40, 1891), 115-122.
[291] A. C. Haddon, *History of Anthropology* (London: Watts and Company, 1910), 156.

there were crucial differences.[292] Balfour's book, *The Evolution of Decorative Art*, was published in 1893, just two years before Haddon's book *Evolution in Art*, published in 1895.[293] For Balfour, who combined Tylor and Frazer's comparative approach with Haddon's emphasis on fieldwork, 'anthropological investigation should be global as well as local, combining specialist regional research and broad conclusions about cross-cultural contact'.[294] He argued that academic study typically consists of three stages: collecting, classifying and analysing, but has been criticised for focusing on the former two at the expense of the latter. Gosden and Larson note that he 'tended to eschew grand theories in favour of generating data' — typically of his time, much of the data he amassed was in the form of artefacts. He referred to those who gather data as 'spinners' and those who theorised about it 'weavers', proposing that 'the "real" work of analysis and discovery could only take place once all the information had been gathered together', hence his emphasis on mass-collecting.[295]

We have noted Balfour's significance as a source of objects for the PRM as a whole, but did he have equivalent significance for the amulets collection? Balfour published almost eighty papers between 1888 and 1937, most of which were detailed notes on a particular sort of artefact, in the manner of Pitt-Rivers — Solomon Islands arrows, thorn-lined traps or the composite bow, for example —

[292] Cambridge and Oxford have reputations for different intellectual approaches, with Oxford focussed more on theory and Cambridge more empirically based. Haddon's methodological advances while in Cambridge could be considered to be part of this institutional distinction.
[293] Levell has compared Pitt-Rivers' with Balfour's writing on evolution and degeneration in art in 'Illustrating Evolution', 265. In *Ethnology, ethnobiography, and institution: A.C. Haddon and anthropology at Cambridge 1880-1926* (University of Cambridge: doctoral thesis, 1996), Rouse explains that Balfour initially supported Haddon's research into the subject.
[294] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 171.
[295] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 81, 118, 88.

often exploring its evolutionary development through history and across cultures.[296] His propensity to collect and classify is evident under the theme of magic. Most of his 'evidence' for magic was in the form of artefacts, with just a few words of identification on a label or catalogue card. Just one of his papers bears any obvious relation to magic or amulets: that on the popular theme of amulets against lightning — *Concerning Thunderbolts*, which was published later in his career, in 1929.[297] In this paper, he reviews attitudes to prehistoric stone 'celts' across time and around the world, from the belief that they were thunderbolts to the scientific point of view identifying them as ancient tools. In his conclusion, Balfour supports the theory of diffusion in relation to the 'thunderbolt' belief.[298] Although such artefacts have often been studied by people with an interest in magic, it seems more likely that Balfour's interest in them stemmed from his enthusiasm for tools. His legacy to the study of magic and amulets seems consistent with his approach and career as a whole. His work at the PRM comprised a substantial collection and display, together with the oversight of a meticulously classified card catalogue. Typically of Balfour's work, his contributions to the study of magic lay in collecting and classifying rather than analysing, in 'spinning' rather than 'weaving'.

[296] H. Balfour, 'On the evolution of a characteristic pattern on the shafts of arrows from the Solomon Islands', JRAI (Vol. 17, 1888), 328-332; 'Thorn-Lined Traps and their Distribution', *Man* (Vol. 25, Mar. 1925), 33-37; 'Notes on the Composite Bow from Hunza', *Man* (Vol. 32, Jul. 1932), 161.
[297] H. Balfour, 'Concerning Thunderbolts', *Folklore* (Vol. 40, No. 1, Mar. 31, 1929), 37-49; 'Concerning Thunderbolts (Continued), *Folklore* (Vol. 40, No. 2, Jun. 30, 1929), 168-172. By this date, Haddon had long ceased to write about British folklore; his publications were either more theoretical, or based on his fieldwork in Oceania.
[298] Balfour, 'Thunderbolts', 48.

How significant, though, was magic in Balfour's collecting? It certainly mattered to the materialisation of magic at the PRM, but how much did magic matter to him? Like Tylor and Haddon, Balfour was involved in the first folklore revival and its aspirations to undertake a UK Ethnographic Survey, salvage British folk practices and create a national folk museum.[299] An *Exhibition of Folk-lore* at the FLS' 1891 International Folk-Lore Congress (explored in Chapter 5), at which Tylor and Haddon also exhibited, contained just five objects from Balfour: four 'kerns' or 'corn babies', from Scotland, Wales and Greece, and a Neolithic 'celt' 'built into a house in Brittany as protection from lightning and thunderbolt[s]'.[300] His selection of artefacts for this particular display, therefore, inclined towards both Europe and the 'superstitious' or 'magical'. However, of 15,000 objects at the PRM for whom Balfour is named as the source, just 126 are classed as 'amulets', ten of which are English. Charms and amulets comprised a little over 1% of his collection, in contrast with fire-making at 14%.[301] Magic and religion, however prominent they may seem in the PRM, and however important they were to contemporary theorists such as Tylor and Frazer, do not appear to have been among Balfour's main interests.[302] Nevertheless, 80% of the objects currently in the magic and amulets display were accessioned during Balfour's years as curator, adding vastly to Pitt-Rivers' assemblage of material magic. Who, then, was responsible for the PRM's emphasis on amulets?

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[299] The folk museum idea is discussed in both Larson, *Invention*, and P. Rivière, 'Success and Failure: the tale of two museums', *Journal of the History of Collections* (Vol. 22, No. 1, 2010), 142. The UK Ethnographic Survey was first re-assessed by James Urry in 'Englishmen, Celts and Iberians: The Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom, 1892–1899', in George Stocking (ed.), *Functionalism Historicized* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, History of Anthropology Vol. 2, 1984), 83–105.

[300] Chairman of the Entertainment Committee, 'Catalogue', 434.

[301] Instead musical instruments, stone tools and fire-making and light-making technologies were the biggest areas of his collection (Larson, *Invention*).

[302] Balfour himself credited Pitt-Rivers' work on firearms as forming the foundation for a 'general, scientific approach to all kinds of material culture' (Larson, *Invention*).

4.7. Cataloguing and classifying: Blackman and Freire-Marreco

Although Balfour displayed little theoretical interest in magic, a great deal of energy was expended collecting and classifying it under his curatorship. A substantial 'detailed amulets card catalogue' was initiated, taking control of the mounds of physical data amassed during his time as curator. Although Balfour's successor Tom Penniman (1895-1977) and their colleague Beatrice Blackwood have been credited with the foundation of the PRM's card catalogue at a later date, the 'detailed amulets card catalogue' began under Balfour.[303] Larson explains that Balfour's 'method of using separate note cards allowed [him to] spread out all the evidence for any technological tradition in front of him… before working out the most appropriate geographical and historical relationships within the tradition and rearranging the notes accordingly'.[304] The themes in the amulets card catalogue, arranged alphabetically, include a full range of 'magical' categories in addition to amulets — *Sympathetic Magic, Divination and Witchcraft, Relics and Mementoes, Evil Eye* and *Juju* among others. Each of these has numerous subdivisions, sometimes categorised by material or physical form, for example *Evil Eye* is divided into 'horns', 'closed fists', 'phallic objects' and so on; 'horns' is further subdivided into 'single horns', 'hand horns', 'little finger horns' and so forth. Today, the two systems sit side-by-side amid the PRM's massed ranks of catalogue card drawers, the thematic ones made under

[303] Gosden and Larson explain that Blackwood instigated the main card catalogue after Balfour's death *(Knowing Things,* 165). Knowles has looked in more detail at Blackwood's career in 'Reverse Trajectories: Beatrice Blackwood as Collector and Anthropologist', in M. O'Hanlon and R.Welsch (eds), *Hunting the Gatherers: Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s* (Oxford: Berghahn, Methodology and History in Anthropology, Vol. 6, 2000), 251-71.
[304] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things,* 165.

Balfour's curatorship beside the series made later by Blackwood and Penniman, which are primarily geographical (*figure 4.3 a-b*).[305]

Balfour's paucity of obvious enthusiasm for magic and amulets raises the question of the extent to which the 'detailed amulets card catalogue' was created through his own initiative or effort. From the PRM's Annual Report entries, written by Balfour between 1893 and 1938, we learn that the ordered state of the PRM's documentation relied heavily on female, unpaid labour. Two volunteers in particular, Barbara Freire-Marreco (1879-1967) and Winifred Blackman (1872-1950), both of whom re-assessed existing collections rather than amassing more material, made substantial contributions. Both took the University of Oxford's Diploma in Anthropology, which was taught at this time by Balfour.[306] Blackman went on to follow a career in anthropology and folklore, Freire-Marreco in archaeology and anthropology. Both wrote for *Folklore*, and Freire-Marreco merited the praise of Ettlinger, herself a specialist in the subject, for her encyclopaedic work on charms and amulets as well as her articles 'on varied customs and ceremonies'.[307] The PRM's Annual Report for 1908 informs us that 'a card-catalogue of the very extensive collection of Amulets, Talismans and Magic-appliances, has been commenced by Miss B. Freire-Marreco, a former Diploma student'. In 1909 we read that she 'has very kindly continued her card catalogue of the Magic series, which is approaching completion'. In 1913 we are

[305] The detailed 'amulets' catalogue itself comprises ten drawers, five arranged thematically and five geographically, which contain 1158 cards in total according to the PRM's online catalogue, accessed 5 Sept. 2012.
[306] Women were not awarded full degrees by the University of Oxford until 1920.
[307] This point was noted by her obituarist E. F. Coote Lake, 'Barbara Freire-Marreco (Mrs Robert Aitken)', *Folklore* (Vol. 78, No. 4, 1967), 306; Freire-Marreco's work included the entry on 'Charms and Amulets' in J. Hastings *et. al.* (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Vol. 111, 1908-1926), 392-398.

told that 'the card-catalogue has been considerably advanced and the series of Musical Instruments, Fire-making, Charms and Amulets, have been completely catalogued to date. This work has been in the hands of Miss W. Blackman'.[308] In 1914, Blackman had 'completed card-lists of some additional series' including 'Magic and Charms'. She also contributed a paper to *Folklore* titled *The Rosary in Magic and Religion*, based on her work with the PRM's collection. She modestly referred to her paper as 'my array of very miscellaneous facts' and used the word 'magic' only twice outside of the title, firstly with reference to Tibetan Buddhism and secondly giving 'an example of what might perhaps be called a magico-religious use of the rosary' in Poland.[309] She evidently thought of herself as a collector and classifier rather than a theorist, and like Tylor, she included folk-elements of major religions in her definition of 'magic'. It is not certain who made decisions about the terminology and hierarchies of words used in the pre-war amulets card catalogue. Given Balfour's disinterest and the specialist interests of Freire-Marreco and Blackman, it seems likely to have been one or both of these women. One can also speculate that the magic and amulets displays, or at least their substantial development, might have taken place between or around 1908 and 1914 when this area of the collection was receiving particular attention.

Half of the PRM's field-collectors of international magic and amulets, too, were women. The 12 most prolific named sources currently represented in the amulets displays comprise a varied range of individuals. Miss C.B. Henty, who

[308] Blackman was evidently interested in magic as two of her papers include the word in their titles: 'The Magical and Ceremonial Uses of Fire', *Folklore* (Vol. 27, No. 4, Dec. 31, 1916), 352-377 and 'The Rosary in Magic and Religion', *Folklore* (Vol. 29, No. 4, Dec. 30, 1918), 255-280.
[309] Blackman, 'Rosary', 266 and 267 respectively.

also held the Diploma in Anthropology, bequeathed her collection of Italian charms to the museum in 1937. Estella Louisa Michaela Canziani (1877-1964), a well-known 'British portrait and landscape painter, an interior decorator and a travel writer and folklorist', donated charms and votive offerings from Europe and North Africa.[310] Canziani was a member of the FLS and well connected in folklore circles. As well as being a major contributor to the PRM's collections, she was a significant donor to other museums including those in Birmingham and Cambridge. Edith Lucy Wake Wood gave 14 ancient Egyptian Eye of Horus pendants previously owned by Charles Frederick Wood, presumably her husband. His profession is listed as 'traveller' and he published a book called *A Yachting Cruise in the South Seas*, so presumably the couple were people of leisure.[311] Little is known about the final two female collectors, Katherine Marian Reynolds (11 amulets and votive offerings from Jerusalem and Syria) or Miss E.C. Bell (11 votive offerings and charms against the evil eye from Turkey, Greece and Italy). For only two of these women — Henty and Canziani — are traces of their academic or professional interest in anthropology or folklore readily available. In addition, the first commercially-made English charms to enter the PRM's collections, probably used by Second World War soldiers, were acquired not from Lovett but from three women in the 1940s — Canziani, Blackwood and the military nurse Dame Katharine Furse.[312]

[310] C. Wingfield, 'Estella Louisa Michaela Canziani (1887-1964)', *England: The Other Within, england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Canziani-Introduction.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 26 Jul. 2016.
[311] C. F. Wood, *A Yachting Cruise in the South Seas* (London: Henry King, 1875).
[312] PRM 1940.12.037, PRM 1940.12.035, PRM 1942.12.67, PRM 1949.3.19.

The rest of the PRM's most prolific sources of amulets were men, all of whom can be identified as professionals in archaeology, anthropology or related fields, or who undertook this work as amateurs alongside their main profession. William Crooke, the donor of 17 Indian amulets, was 'a British orientalist and a key figure in the study and documentation of Anglo-Indian folklore'; Robert William Theodore Günther (1869-1940) was a zoologist and founded the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford.[313] Günther donated 16 Italian items, mostly ceramic votive offerings but also two Neapolitan charms more akin to his material in the MAA's Folklore Cabinet. Sir Richard Carnac Temple, donor of 13 charms and votives from India, Japan and Burma, was 'British Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and an anthropological writer', as well as a significant donor to the BM. Finally, the Egyptologists Henri Edouard Naville and Henry Reginald Holland Hall gave the Museum 11 ancient Egyptian votive offerings on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund. Despite their differential access to professional careers, the associated documentary information provided with the objects by female and male collectors is very similar. There seems to have been a consensus at this time as to the level of context required to understand amulets. In some respects they were considered to be self-explanatory. Those who studied them credited them with inherent power of a different kind — the power to inform.

[313] A.V. Simcock, (ed.), *Robert T. Günther and the Old Ashmolean*, (Oxford: Museum of the History of Science, 1985).

4.8. Conclusion to Chapter 4

The present case study forms the first of four chapters examining the centripetal forces — ideas, institutions, people and objects — which brought charms and amulets together in particular places and at particular times up until the Second World War. The chapter began by reviewing the PRM's collections and displays of magic and amulets, then set these in their historical context, the development of biological and cultural evolutionary sciences in the mid-nineteenth century. It then looked at how three individuals who were influential in the institutionalisation of English amulets at the Pitt-Rivers Museum — Pitt-Rivers, Tylor and Balfour — emerged from and shaped this context. These individuals approached magic and materiality in different ways, yet they all had significant agency in creating the magic and amulets displays and collections that we inherit today, in Oxford and beyond. Through focusing on these individuals the chapter builds on our understanding of academic attitudes to material culture and magic, and on ways in which relationships between ideas, objects, people and institutions have changed. Tylor theorised about magic without collecting much, while Pitt-Rivers collected without thinking much about magic. Together, they gave birth to the PRM, both as an idea and as a physical place, for which Balfour was then responsible for adding physicality and momentum. All were interested in relationships between the material and the immaterial worlds, whether spiritual or intellectual). Their efforts were underpinned by those of three women — Barbara Freire-Marreco, Winifred Blackman and later Beatrice Blackwood — who were largely responsible in practice for the classification and analysis of the PRM’s magic and amulets collections.

It is striking that material magic was not the core interest of Pitt-Rivers, Tylor or Balfour, yet together they were of fundamental importance to its material preservation. Pitt-Rivers may have considered it to be just one category among many others in his efforts to form a comprehensive understanding of humankind, but in doing so he created England's first systematic collection of magical objects, which continued to attract more of the same long after the motives that drove him became academically obsolete. Balfour may not have had a particular interest in magic, but he continued collecting to fill 'gaps' in Pitt-Rivers' 'series'. Following through an idea used in *Knowing Things*, it seems as if material magic developed a force of its own, requiring itself to be collected and classified.

What specific insights, though, have been gained by considering the magic and amulets collections as opposed, for example, to those concerning weaponry or fire-making? What has been learned by looking at the materialisation of magic as opposed to its immaterial forms? The relationship between materiality and magic, specifically, is a significant one. Objects of popular magic did not enter public museum collections until they came to be viewed as scientific specimens by members of the educated élite. Museums, after all, began as élite institutions that later admitted 'the masses' with the aim of educating them, and they were concerned with differentiating themselves from popular entertainment. They attempted to do this by comparing their beliefs and values favourably to those of the of the past and of British Empire's colonised peoples. As a part of this project, Pitt-Rivers and the PRM set in motion the professional collection and display of

popular magic. He and his coterie hoped to contribute to what they considered to be 'progress' by allowing people to see the error of their 'superstitious' ways.

Today, the PRM holds an ambivalent attitude towards the prevalent popular perception of itself as static and conservative, playing on this to attract visitors whilst preferring to emphasise its dynamic and 'emergent' qualities when in academic company.[314] However, the objects in question and the people who assembled them have also been, in some ways, agents of inertia rather than agents of change. The early theorists, collectors, and classifiers used English amulets to understand and illustrate the 'survival' of what they considered to be 'primitive' beliefs and practices within their own society, drawing parallels between modern Europeans and people who were less familiar to them. In seeking to rationalise the irrational, academics sought to stamp it out. Instead, through its material preservation in the form of English amulets in museum displays, they helped to conserve it.

This case study has situated English amulets in the emergence and separation of academic disciplines including natural history, anthropology, ethnology, folklore and archaeology. The PRM and the University of Oxford have been key sites where these changes have been played out. The magic and amulets displays and collections are instructive in that they originated at a time when many subjects which later became separated intellectually were still unified — objects and ideas, the past and the present, Europe and the rest of the world, and natural and human sciences all came under the banner of 'anthropology'. As these disciplines

[314] See Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*.

parted, the original justification for the collections ebbed away. Rather than being reinterpreted or returned to storage as academic fashions changed, however, the PRM's displays and collections continued to attract similar objects — the only major museum where this has happened.

As magical objects shifted in status, the powers attributed to them shifted too.[315] For their original makers and users, the objects themselves had the power to harm or to heal. To theoreticians, collectors and curators who transformed them into scientific specimens, they had intrinsic powers to help understand human culture and contribute to human progress. In the early-twentieth century, as social anthropology disentangled itself from biological anthropology, archaeology and folklore, and as the academic focus on objects shifted towards people and words, academics increasingly viewed these objects with distaste as curiosities. Not all amulets originally required verbal charms to activate their magic, but words became increasingly required to activate them academically. Until more recent revivals of academic interest in the material culture of magic, museum visitors were increasingly free to interpret them as they chose. To an observer, objects can still hold a powerful fascination that words do not. The scientific interests of past professionals at the PRM led to the preservation of these objects, which now allow those who encounter them today to feel a more visceral connection to their own past. Although there have been no specific studies of visitors' responses to the PRM's magic and amulets displays, research into similar exhibitions elsewhere indicates that visitors past and present use

[315] Papers in K. Jacobs *et. al.*, *Trophies, Relics and Curios? Missionary Heritage from Africa and the Pacific* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2015), consider how the status attributed to an object can shift between categories such as trophy, relic, curio and scientific specimen.

them to uphold their own beliefs (Jude Hill on the WHMM) or to re-imagine their connections with their own past (Helen Cornish on the MWM).[316] On the one hand, academics today consider the power and influence that objects can have over people; on the other hand, believers trust in the actual magical power of objects.

[316] Hill, 'Story'; H. Cornish, Cunning Histories: Privileging Narratives in the Present', *History and Anthropology* (Vol. 16, No. 3, 2005), 363-376 and 'Spelling out History: Transforming Witchcraft Past and Present', *The Pomegranate* (Vol. 11, No. 1, 2009), 14-28.

CHAPTER 5. Finding a home for material magic

In the previous chapter, I noted that parallel streams carried English amulets into the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM, Oxford) and what is now the Museum of General and Local Archaeology (MGLA, later MAA, Cambridge).[317] Here, I follow the stream which fed into the MGLA through the Folk-Lore (later Folklore) Society, in particular its influential members Tylor and Haddon, in order to investigate how, why and to what extent this material became professionalised and institutionalised. In the mid-nineteenth century, as we have seen, intellectual life centred on scholarly societies. Professional academic and curatorial posts were yet to emerge in the human sciences and much foundational work was undertaken by amateurs. Many theoreticians and collectors were members of multiple societies. Material objects were understood to be important pieces of scientific evidence. This chapter examines how objects of English folk magic entered the MGLA conjointly with the creation of new academic departments, professional posts and scientific aspirations at the University of Cambridge.

The first part of the chapter looks at how the FLS's collections entered the MGLA, largely through Tylor's leverage. The second part focuses on Haddon's role. Although Haddon is better known for his 1898 anthropological expedition to the Torres Strait, widely regarded to be the first in scientific anthropology, he was

[317] The museum's name-changes reflect the shifting emphases of academic disciplines in Cambridge. Its Annual Report for 1977 says that 'for historical record, the name of the Museum has evolved as follows: 1884-1906 Museum of General and Local Archaeology / 1906-1913 Museum of General and Local Archaeology and of Ethnology / 1913-1978 University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology' (MAE); see Board of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, *90th Annual Report of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology for the academical year 1977-78* (University of Cambridge: MAE, 1977-78), 3. From 2006, under the directorship of Professor Nicholas Thomas, the museum adopted the acronym MAA.

also a noteworthy collector of material magic from England and further afield.[318] He propounded the idea of founding a museum of British folklore and pulled together some of the first major public collections of objects of folk magic, those at the MAA and at the Horniman.

5.1. The Folklore Society and material magic

Notwithstanding Pitt-Rivers' comparative efforts, the FLS was the first UK public institution which explicitly proposed to create a British or English national folklore museum, incorporating individual collections of English amulets amongst more secular 'survivals' within a wider scientific remit. The anthropologist Peter Rivière says of a committee organising an abortive Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom that, although it was concerned with collecting many types of data, 'it never seems to have proposed the collection of material artefacts and the setting up of a museum', although this was mooted by some of its more materially-oriented members, including Pitt-Rivers and Balfour.[319] Likewise, neither the BAAS nor the RAI aspired to set up a museum and although the Society of Antiquaries (established earlier, in 1707) has collections, these contain few charms and amulets and indeed, little vernacular culture.[320] Engagement with material collecting, then, appears to have been taken more seriously by the FLS than by these related organisations. Although

[318] The MAA holds most of Haddon's vast anthropological collections from the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea as well as his cross-cultural selection of amulets and other magical artefacts.
[319] Rivière, 'Success and Failure', 142.
[320] The Society's current mission statement, taken from its founding document (The Society of Antiquaries of London, Royal Charter, 1751), proffers 'the encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries' — see The Society of Antiquaries London, 'About the Society of Antiquaries London', *www.sal.org.uk/about-us/* (London, The Society of Antiquaries, no date), accessed 3 Oct. 2016.

the proposed museum itself never materialised, the collections amassed towards this end made significant contributions to the MAA and other museums.

Recent writers on the FLS' collections demonstrate the shared roots of folklore and anthropology, as well as the importance of collecting material culture in the early histories of these disciplines. Museums holding English amulets incorporated individual antiquarian collections into institutional assemblages based on anthropological theory. The historian of anthropology James Urry explains that 'anthropology in the 1890s was barely recognized in British universities. It was still largely located in London learned societies and was the preserve of gentlemen scholars, amateurs and a few academics in other fields'.[321] The anthropologist Paul Sillitoe has provided a detailed history of the FLS itself whilst exploring the importance of institutions as 'agents' more broadly, in particular the BAAS, its links with the FLS and its role in the UK Ethnographic Survey.[322] The BAAS was founded in 1831 and as we have seen, the AI (later RAI) was formed from its predecessors in 1871. Anthropological institutions thus predated those focusing on folklore and although Thoms famously conceived the term in 1846, the FLS was not established until 1878. Disciplinary boundaries were not yet clear — at one point it seemed likely that the FLS would become a sub-section of the AI; instead, they diverged.[323] In the twentieth century, the (R)AI became increasingly professional (and exclusive) while the FLS remained

[321] J. Urry, 'From Zoology to Ethnology: A.C. Haddon's conversion to anthropology', in *Before Social Anthropology: Essays on the history of British anthropology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 76.
[322] P. Sillitoe, 'The Role Of Section H at the British Association for the Advancement of Science in the history of anthropology', *Durham Anthropology Journal* (Vol. 13, No. 2, 2005), 1-17.
[323] Wingfield and Gosden, 'Imperialist Folklore?', 257.

more inclusive (including female as well as male amateurs), to the detriment of its academic reputation.

In the present chapter, I will attempt to discover why the FLS and its contributing collectors took both magic and material things seriously and, more precisely, collected amulets seriously. From its inception, the FLS was keen to emphasise its scientific credentials, explicitly contrasting itself with 'the unconsidered trifles of popular thought and usage that go to make up the bulk of such books as Brand's (or rather Bourne's) *Popular Antiquities*'.[324] Both antiquarian collectors and anthropological theorists referred back to many of the same sources for references to magic, from Pliny's *Natural History*, the Bible and King James' *Daemonologie* to Brand and the accounts of early travellers.[325] Later collections of material magic followed the form of, illustrated, or even materialised categories used by Brand, whose book includes sections on 'charms' and 'amulets' as well as calendrical and life-cycle events, sorcery and witchcraft, omens and divination, as well as other themes unrelated to ritual or magic. Douglas has suggested that Thoms' coinage 'folk-lore' simply replaced the earlier term 'popular antiquities', under which the same practices were already grouped.[326] Similarly, the objects under consideration in this thesis were grouped together, whether or not they were described as 'superstitions' or as 'magic'. It seems that the terms 'folklore' and 'magic' took over from 'popular antiquities' and 'superstitions' as the study of these objects came to be regarded

[324] Anon., 'Editorial', *Folklore* (Vol. 1, 1890), 1, referring to Brand, J. with H. Ellis and H. Bourne, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: chiefly illustrating the origin of vulgar and provincial customs, ceremonies, and superstitions* (London: Bohn, 1849).
[325] Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., Vol. 8, books 28-32, 1963 [before 79 CE]); James I, King of England, *Daemonologie,* (1579); Brand, *Popular Antiquities*.
[326] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 29.

as science. The terminology used was an inherent part of claiming professional respectability for such studies.

The FLS was explicitly set up to compare what it referred to as 'civilised' with 'savage' peoples, whether amongst the English working-classes, in Britain's past, or overseas.[327] In the first edition of its journal *Folk-Lore*, published in 1890, the Society aligned itself with an array of academic disciplines, claiming in its first editorial that the 'science' of folklore 'has been correlated with all the groups of organised studies that deal with the Past of Man', most significantly for our purposes 'Ethnography and Anthropology' because, it was claimed, 'much of Folk-lore that eludes explanation from the thoughts and customs of civilised peoples finds ready elucidation from savage practice and belief'. This emphasis on science made magic a perfect proposition as a 'significant other'.[328] Frazer's *Golden Bough* was first published in the same year, but although magic was central to Frazer's evolutionary theories, the FLS' collections included a wide range of more secular 'survivals'. 'Magic' itself was only of prime concern to a number of particular collectors; to others (including, as noted, Pitt-Rivers) it was just another sub-category of human culture, alongside toys and games, heating and lighting, and so on.

Richard Dorson, George Monger and Oliver Douglas have all written about the origins of the FLS' material collections. From reports and editorials in *Folk-Lore* (renamed *Folklore* in the 1950s) as well as from these writers, we learn that the

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[328] Hutton, *Moon*, 131.

FLS actively encouraged its members to collect. Objects were routinely shown at scholarly meetings and lectures, then presented to the Society. During what Dorson calls the movement's 'high water mark', the International Folk-Lore Congress held in London in 1891, an 'Exhibition of Objects connected with Folk-Lore' was held, with the intention that these would 'form the nucleus of a Folk-Lore Museum'.[329] Douglas takes this as a starting point for his thesis, explaining that 'the ambitious plan for a folklore museum fell short of the mark but left its material residues distributed throughout a range of collections'.[330] Haddon and Balfour, both of whom were active advocates of the FLS' proposed museum, were also influential in the growth and development of the MAA and PRM respectively, including those institutions' amulets collections. Haddon 'advocated the expansion of museum provision, particularly folk, open-air and history museums' and following the opening of Skansen (the pioneering Swedish open-air folk-museum), also in 1891, he suggested that 'some of the collections at the Horniman could form the nucleus of a new national museum'.[331] This was never achieved, and the English 'folk' or working-class people remained sparsely represented in museums during the early- to mid-twentieth century.[332]

Institutions like the FLS, PRM and MAA relied on heterogeneous contributors for their objects and their information. Douglas has characterised Dorson's historical

[329] Dorson, *British Folklorists,* 298-303.
[330] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 252.
[331] A. Herle, 'The Life-Histories of Objects: collections of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait', in A. Herle and S. Rouse (eds.), *Cambridge and the Torres Strait: centenary essays on the 1998 anthropological expedition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 100.
[332] Such museums were nascent in continental Europe in the form of Sweden's Skansen, founded in 1891, but did flourish in Britain until after the Second World War, as explored by P. Rivière (ed.), *A History of Anthropology at the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007) and Wingfield, '*Greater Britain*'.

accounts of the British folklore movement as 'hagiographic' because of their focus on 'great men'.[333] Instead, Douglas points out that 'material folklore was a networked endeavour, dependant upon enthusiastic amateurs, informants, and makers' and that objects, institutions and people all had agency in the process of forming its collections. The UK Ethnographic Survey, Douglas explains, 'exemplified these relationships, employing regional amateurs to undertake the delegated instructions of scientific elites'.[334] However, while some field collectors of charms and amulets may have followed guidelines provided in publications such as the *Handbook of Folklore* and *Notes and Queries*, others followed their own separate agendas, as demonstrated in my case studies.[335] Even so, the objects they amassed were incorporated into institutional collections where they were used to advance evolutionary theories. Without the intellectual context provided by theoreticians including Tylor and Frazer, material magic would not have been considered worthy of inclusion in scientific museums.

5.2. The International Folk-Lore Congress

In the first edition of *Folk-Lore* we find a report looking forward to the 1891 Congress, at which the Society first exhibited folkloric material, including charms

[333] Douglas, *Material Culture*, i, referring to R. M. Dorson, 'The Great Team of English Folklorists', *Journal of American Folklore* (Vol. 64, No. 251, 1951), 1–10.
[334] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 3.
[335] G. L. Gomme (ed.), *The Handbook of Folk-Lore* (London, David Nutt, 1890); BAAS, A. H. L. F., Pitt-Rivers, Beddoe, J., Franks, A. W., Galton, F., Brabrook, E. W., Lubbock, J., Elliot, W., Markham, C. R. & Tylor, E. B. (eds.), *Notes and Queries on Anthropology for the Use of Travelers and Residents in Uncivilized Lands* (London: BAAS, 1874).

and amulets.[336] The report gushes with all the enthusiasm of a young science: 'almost for the first time, English Folk-lore is about to emerge before the public gaze, and to show its claims for treatment as an object worthy of study and research. The leaders of the Congress have done their best that this debut shall be worthy of the science'.[337] Douglas writes that 'members were invited to loan objects to displays' at the Congress which 'formed the first major exhibition of objects connected with folklore that Britain had seen', and that 'artifactual and financial contributions were solicited and surplus funds were to support the acquisition of specimens for a folklore museum'.[338] The Congress was held at the Society of Antiquaries' headquarters at Burlington House in London, and included a day out to Oxford including 'the Museum, with its unrivalled Pitt-Rivers collection', thus linking an Enlightenment-era with a Victorian institution.[339] As noted, Pitt-Rivers had displayed similar objects a decade before at the Bethnal Green Museum, although he defined them as 'superstitions' rather than 'folklore'. These already formed part of the PRM's founding collection, and although we cannot be certain, it seems likely that they would have been on display at the time of the Congress' visit.

We read in *Folk-Lore* that in preparation for the Congress, it was 'hoped that any readers of FOLK-LORE who may have objects likely to be of interest to the students of the science will lend them at the Conversazione'.[340] The Conversazione was the Congress' more light-hearted element with 'its

[336] Anon., 'The International Folk-lore Congress, 1891', *Folklore* (Vol. 2, No. 3, Sep. 1891), 373-380.
[337] Anon., 'Folk-lore Congress', 380.
[338] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 232-239.
[339] Anon., 'Folk-lore Congress', 378.
[340] This and the following quotes are from Anon., 'Folk-lore Congress', 377-378.

combination of amusement and instruction, together with games, music, dance, stories, recitation, play and refreshments' in character with the occasion. It is here that we find 'CHARMS, AMULETS, etc.' at the bottom of a list of 'some of the objects promised' for the exhibition. This positioning suggests that they were taken for granted, almost an oversight. On the other hand, out of eighteen contributions in total, seven comprised or included charms and amulets. These were international in nature, including 'amulets and Hindoo gods' and 'Russian charms' as well as a 'Neolithic Celt, used as a charm' from Balfour. Other exhibitors included Haddon, who displayed four 'charms' from the Torres Strait and Papuan Gulf, a subject in which he had a particular interest, among other items.[341] A catalogue was published to accompany the exhibition, in which objects which could be construed as fitting into Tylor's definition of 'magic' occupied a similar position.[342] So, although material magic was relegated to the *Conversazione* and to the bottom of its list, its contribution was substantial.

None of the Congress' 'sections' — *Folk-Tale*, *Mythology*, or *Institutions* — pertained to magic specifically, as Tylor himself observed. In his short paper *Exhibition of Charms and Amulets*, presented at the Congress, Tylor commented that he had 'been asked to exhibit to the Folk-lore Congress my own small collection of charms and amulets, and to make a few descriptive remarks upon

[341] Chairman of the Entertainment Committee, 'Catalogue', 451. Herle in 'Life-histories', 79, informs us that Haddon had a particular 'fascination with charms or *zogos'* from the Torres Strait and continued collecting these from intermediaries to 'fill the gaps' in his collection after returning from the field in 1899. The Congress was seven years before the expedition.
[342] Chairman of the Entertainment Committee, 'Catalogue', 453-454.

them'.[343] Although his paper was part of the 'general theory and classification section' of 'the day devoted to Mythology', he lamented that 'there is no special section devoted to… Magic'. He made clear his opinion that 'the time will come when the importance of Magic, in studying the lower developments of the human mind, will become so much more evident'. He emphasised that he had 'for years endeavoured to prove that the main source of Mythology is also the main source of Magic', arguing that 'the process of sympathetic magic is to be traced to the same intelligible, but illogical, association of ideas which lies at the root of the apparently creative fancies of the myth maker'. The concept of magic appears to have been central to the theoretical foundations of anthropology, folklore and the human sciences more broadly, but at this time, Tylor was fighting for its significance.[344] Collecting material objects was one way in which he did this.

Tylor accompanied his paper at the Congress with a selection of objects from his own collection, strongly resembled by the range on display at the PRM today. He used Mediterranean charms, in particular Neapolitan charms against the 'Evil Eye' such as *cimaruta*, to demonstrate the boundaries he drew between 'magic' and 'religion' but also to argue that the former can be an element of the latter, saying that 'a great part of magic calls into help spiritual powers, deities who will dispel and cure the disease'.[345] Typically, he made sweeping comparisons across time and space, in particular connecting the crescent shapes seen in *cimaruta*

[343] All Tylor quotes in this paragraph are from E. B. Tylor, 'Exhibition of Charms and Amulets', *The Second International Folk-Lore Congress 1891: Papers and Transactions* (London: David Nutt, 1892), 387.
[344] All of the quotes in this paragraph are from Tylor, 'Exhibition', 392. Magic and amulets also played their part in the writings of pioneering social scientists Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920) as well as Sigmund Freud (1836-1939).
[345] This quote and the next are from Tylor, 'Exhibition', 392-393.

and English horse brasses to ancient Roman moon-goddess veneration, suggesting that 'objects supposed to be mere ornaments may be survivals of once potent charms'. Having provided comparative examples illustrating ancient (Egyptian) and what he regarded as 'primitive' (Aboriginal Australian) sympathetic magic — as do the PRM's current displays — Tylor returned to his own time and place to point out that similar practices 'survive' in modern Britain. He displayed and discussed in detail three British objects said to have been used for malevolent magic, all of which are were on display during my 2012 visit, having been re-analysed as part of the PRM's recent research projects: from England, 'an onion stuck full of pins' from 'John Milton, a shoemaker in Rockwell Green' and a 'witches' ladder' from Wellington (both in Somerset, Tylor's home county), as well as a '*corp cre*, clay body' from northern Scotland.[346] Tylor commented that 'though often written of, such objects are comparatively seldom seen, so that it is still worthwhile to exhibit specimens of them to students of Folk-lore'.[347] This raises the question of whether their plentiful representation in museums left a paucity of examples in 'the field', whether they were rarely used, or whether it was simply difficult for collectors to access them. It seems that Tylor's perception of the theoretical importance of magic, coupled with his conviction in the importance of materiality in human cultural development,

[346] Tylor, 'Exhibition', 389-390. These artefacts have been re-assessed in Wingfield 'Is the Heart', and Douglas, *Material Culture*, respectively. Wingfield explains that the reputation of the 'witch's ladder', a string of feathers, has changed over time from a charm 'used for getting away the milk from the neighbours' cows' to one used for binding positive wishes by modern Wiccans. The *corp cre* has often been cited as an example of British malevolent magic, for example in C. Hole, *Witchraft in Britain* (London: Batsford, 1977) and more recently in N. Armitage, '*European and African figural ritual magic: The beginnings of the voodoo doll myth*', in Houlbrook and Armitage, *Materiality*, 85-102.
[347] Tylor, 'Exhibition', 388.

provided his impetus for collecting and displaying these objects, although like Pitt-Rivers, he wrote little about them.[348]

Only two other papers at the Congress specifically referred to magic, both on international themes. These were by the prominent American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903) on 'Etruscan Magic' and the American folklorist Mary Alicia Owen (1850-1935), whom Tylor had invited to speak, on African American 'Voodoo Magic', an ancient European subject and a contemporary theme from further afield, respectively. Leland exhibited a typical collection of amulets from around the world, while Owen's Mesquakie-Fox beadwork from North America later formed one of the FLS' most valued collections. According to Alison Brown, Owen's 'family legend holds that her breakthrough into the international folklore scene began' when she started corresponding with Leland, who also encouraged her to attend the Congress.[349] Leland is better known for his book *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* which later became influential in the twentieth century English occult revival.[350] Although magic was taken seriously at the Congress, then, this was mainly within a tightly knit circle of people who championed its study. Its material manifestations played an important part in the study of magic as well as forming a significant part of the FLS' collections.

5.3. Homing the Folklore Society's collection

[348] Tylor published little about magical objects specifically and there is no substantial coverage of the subject in his archives at the PRM.
[349] Brown, 'Collecting', 35, compares the folklore collections of Owen with those of Margaret Hasluck. Both women collected in the Balkans, Margaret with her husband Frederick William.
[350] C. G. Leland, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (London: David Nutt, 1899). Hutton explores Leland's influence on the concept of witchcraft as a surviving pagan religion in *Moon* (141-8) and in particular on G. L. Gomme (149), Margaret Murray (199) and Gerald Gardner (225 and 234).

Despite its enthusiasm for collecting, the FLS never physically kept the collections that were under its nominal ownership, which eventually became what Douglas refers to as a dispersed 'reference collection, if not an actual museum'.[351] Instead, Douglas notes, the exhibition at the Congress 'was a direct precursor to another important development. Inspired by the Burlington House displays, Cambridge-based anthropologist Haddon revived the potential for the FLS to establish its own museum' by creating a 'Folk-Lore Section' at the MGLA.[352] The FLS' collection had already been turned down by the South Kensington and Guildhall Museums, London, both of which had also previously rejected Pitt-Rivers' collection; basically, it did not fit neatly with their respective scientific, economic and archaeological interests.[353]

Following the Congress, the FLS' English amulets — together with the rest of the Society's collection — found their first long-term institutional home at the MGLA, which had opened in 1884. The new museum incorporated the collections of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (which had been gathering material since 1839), Cambridge colleges and specific individuals.[354] The museum's Annual Report first divided its list of new accessions into 'archaeological', 'ethnological' and 'folk-lore' specimens in 1894, a decade after it opened and three years after the Congress. Each of these categories was subdivided by continent, of which Europe

[351] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 85.
[352] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 89.
[353] See O. A. Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals, and the Neo-archaic: The Materialist Character of Late-nineteenth-century Homeland Ethnography', *Museum History Journal*, Volume 4, Number 2 (Jul. 2011), 236.
[354] MAA, 'Museum History', *maa.cam.ac.uk/category/about-the-museum-of-archaeology-and-anthropology-history-governance-job-opportunities-staff/museum-history/* (Cambridge: MAA, 2020), accessed 24 Oct. 2020.

consistently had the smallest number of anthropology accessions. The earliest reference to 'Folk-Lore', in 1894, refers to a Scottish collection of everyday tools:

> Among the interesting objects placed on deposit during the year, is a small collection of implements &c., of very primitive form, brought from the Shetland Islands, by the Rev. C.L. Acland. Though mostly still in actual use, these implements are fast being supplanted by machine-made goods. With this Acland Loan Collection, and a few cognate specimens previously presented by…[various] others [including Frazer], the Museum has the foundation of what, in default of a better name, may be called a Folk-Lore Section, for the exhibition of survivals which help to illustrate the past by the present'. [355]

This passage gives a sense of the urgent need for salvage in the face of industrialization, making it clear that the 'Folk-Lore Section' was concerned with what were considered to be obsolescent material 'survivals'. 'Magical' items were a subset of these but a particularly significant one, in that they were thought to demonstrate the survival of modes of thought as well as practice. The arrangement was formalised in the same year, and in 1895 the FLS' Council reported that 'the question of an exhibition of Folk-Lore objects was taken in hand during the year, and an appeal was made for gifts or loans' of objects.[356] The MGLA first dedicated a display case to folklore in 1896, subsidised by the FLS, who 'expressed the intention of depositing in the Museum… such specimens

[355] Antiquarian Committee, 'Ninth Annual Report of the Antiquarian Committee to the Senate, Nov. 16, 1893', *Cambridge University Reporter* (University of Cambridge: MAE, 1893-94), 4-5. These Acland objects provide an example of the neglect into which the British collections fell at the MAA, as they were not properly packed and stored until the start of the twenty-first century.
[356] G. L. Gomme and F. A. Milne, 'Fifteenth Annual Report of the Council', *Folklore* (No. 4, 1893), 110.

as may come into their possession'.[357] When I conducted my survey in 2007, the MAA's database contained 1,285 accessions classified as 'folklore'. To put these in context, the full artefact database held in excess of 137,000 records at this time, of which about 60,000 were classified as anthropology and the rest as archaeology.[358] The collections referred to as 'folklore' were managed as a subdivision of anthropology. By no means all of these are English, British or European, nor are they all concerned with magic.

Haddon's early influence in forming the MGLA/MAA's Folklore Collection is apparent from the museum's archives, though it is not spelled out in its Annual Reports. The earliest archival reference to 'folklore' is a label for 'Nails from Toothache Stone' from Islay in Scotland, which is signed by Haddon and reads 'Folk-Lore Dept 1895'. This demonstrates that he was involved in collecting folklore long before he was formally involved with the museum. Three further old (undated) display labels reading 'Folklore / Haddon Collection', 'Irish Folklore / Haddon Collection' and 'European Folklore / Haddon Collection', indicate his importance in the collection's foundation and his early focus on material from the British Isles and Europe. It seems probable that these labels originate from the time when the collections belonged to the Society but resided at the museum, although it is possible that Haddon used them for his private

[357] Antiquarian Committee, 'Eleventh Annual Report of the Antiquarian Committee to the Senate, February 27, 1896', *Cambridge University Reporter* (University of Cambridge: MAE, 1895-96), 3.
[358] These statistics are based on an August 2007 database download, so figures for MAA's collections as a whole will have changed since then. With regards to 'folklore', however, the numbers are unlikely to have changed significantly because the MAA no longer classifies objects as 'folklore', and since the 1992 redisplay at least, objects have (as a rule) neither been added or removed from the Cabinet. The MAA has a comparatively small amount of British anthropological material, with just 244. catalogue records for the British Isles in 2007 (192 for England, 49 for Scotland, 42 for Ireland and 13 for Wales), as well as 1146 for the rest of Europe excluding the UK, with a bias towards indigenous Sami material.

collection at home. This line of reasoning is supported by the fact that a 'dream charm' from Islay, formerly belonging to the MAA but later transferred to the former Cambridge and County Folk Museum (CCFM, now called the Museum of Cambridge, MoC) is labelled 'Dept Folk-Lore Soc., 1895'.

Also in 1894, Haddon undertook his ethnographic survey of the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland, and his publications on Irish anthropology arrived at the MGLA, together with eight photographs and a model coracle from Galway. Haddon was attracted to the Aran Islands because he believed their lifestyle to be a relic from the past, noting in a public lecture that because the West of Ireland is inaccessible, there 'we find many ancient relics still lingering in monuments and in folk-custom and belief, which would have been more or less obliterated if these islands had lain in one of the highways of the world'.[359] His paper *A Batch of Irish Folklore* follows *Folk-Lore*'s 'miscellanea' format in which lists of superstitions, customs and tales were collated with the intention that someone would analyse them at a later date. Evidently with his mind on a more systematic scientific survey, Haddon expressed frustration that he had not been able to collect more comprehensively and was therefore publishing his work in an what he considered to be an unfinished state.[360] Ironically, a similar point was still being made in 1928 by the FLS' then President, A.R. Wright, who said that 'before you classify and analyse you must catch your custom and your superstition, and there is so very much more still to be done in the way of

[359] MAA WO6/1/6: manuscript extract from the 'text of lecture on Western Isles of Ireland inc. folk customs etc.'.
[360] Haddon, *Wedding Dance-Mask*, 349-364.

collection… But we must remember that collection of facts, while very important, is not an end or a science in itself…'.[361]

In pursuit of such 'facts', the FLS aspired to identify existing relevant collections as well as assembling new material. In 1893, guidance for local committees suggested that 'a list be drawn up of Folk-lore objects in all the Museums and Private Collections in the country, such as Amulets, Feasten Cakes, Harvest Trophies' and so on.[362] Again in 1895, a note in *Folk-Lore* suggests that members collect and record folklore, insisting that 'much is on the verge of extinction, more has irrevocably gone. It is now our duty to save what we can. If members will only make the effort they will find that not only can objects still be obtained, but an interest in our science will be extended and new adherents gained'.[363] The FLS, then, initially aimed to collect 'folklore' rather than just 'magic' for the benefit of 'science', but 'magical' practices formed an important element of 'folklore'.

A review of papers published in the FLS' Journal allows us to consider how folklore collectors used the term 'magic' and similar expressions, as well as how this changed over time during the period covered by this study. Whereas Tylor did not write for *Folk-lore*, Haddon contributed some of the journal's first articles taking a theoretical approach to material folklore. The first substantial papers on the subject appeared in the early 1890s — Haddon's on material resulting from

[361] A. R. Wright, 'Presidential Address: The unfinished tasks of the Folk-Lore Society', *Folklore* (Vol. 39, No. 1,Mar. 31, 1928), 32.
[362] Gomme and Milne, 'Fifteenth Annual Report', 113, also cited in Douglas, *Material Culture*, 91.
[363] Anon., untitled endnote in R. C. Maclagan, 'Notes on Folklore Objects collected in Argyleshire', *Folklore* (Vol. 6, No. 2, Jun. 1895), 161.

his Irish fieldwork and the Scottish folklore collector Robert Craig Maclagan's on Scottish material.[364] Haddon's papers *A Wedding Dance Mask from County Mayo* and *A Batch of Irish Folklore* were published in 1893, just two years after the Congress and a year before these collections were transferred to the MGLA.[365] Papers about Mediterranean and worldwide charms followed soon after, as they too became incorporated into the theoretical framework of cultural evolution and 'survivals'.[366] In this proto-ethnographic context, it was considered appropriate to translate practices used in different cultural settings as 'magic'. Maclagan, for example, contributed several papers to *Folklore* between 1895 and 1903 on folkloric objects form Argyllshire including those which might be considered 'magical': the *corp chre*, the evil eye and written and physical charms.[367] In his paper *Notes on Folklore Objects Collected in Argyllshire,* Maclagan used the word 'magic' as his own translation of a Gaelic equivalent: he spoke of a lad who had '*Eolas* (knowledge, magical) connections', of a '*slachdan* (bettle or magic wand)', and 'magical loops' worn on a garter for the purpose of marriage divination.[368] In his book *Evil Eye in the Western Highlands* he concludes that '*eolas, fios*, are in reality magic processes'.[369] In this Scottish context, clearly the use of the word 'magic' is a subjective translation. The issues are different with English collections, where no linguistic translation is required,

[364] R. C. Maclagan, 'Notes', 144-161.
[365] A. C. Haddon, 'A Wedding Dance-Mask from Co. Mayo', *Folklore* (Vol. 4, No. 1, Mar. 1893), 123-124; 'A Batch of Irish Folk-lore', *Folk-lore* (Vol. 4, No. 3, Sept. 1893), 349-364.
[366] Anon., 'Italian Amulets', *Folklore* (Vol. 8, No. 4, Dec. 1897), 378; on Siam (Thailand), M. H. Debenham, 'Charm for the Evil Eye', *Folklore* (Vol. 8, No. 1, Mar. 1897), 92; on India, M. J. Walhouse, 'Snake-Stones', *Folklore* (Vol. 8, No. 1, Mar. 1897), 284. Note that these were all published in the same year, 1897.
[367] Maclagan, 'Notes', *Evil Eye in the Western Highlands* (London: David Nutt, 1902) and 'Charms &c., figured on Plate IX', *Folklore* (Vol. 14, No. 1, Mar. 1903), 298. Maclagan's published over 30 papers and books, mainly on Scottish folklore, between 1864 and 1914.
[368] Maclagan, 'Notes', 161.
[369] Maclagan, 'Notes', 141.

although the terminology we are given is more often that of the collector rather than the user.

Many collectors assumed the role of data gatherers rather than analysts or theoreticians, publishing lists of examples or 'data' bearing close resemblance to those of earlier antiquarians. These were often published in the journal's *Collectanea*, *Miscellanea* and *Correspondence* sections, rather than in the sections devoted to longer, more theoretically oriented papers. Mabel Peacock's *Amulets used in Lincolnshire* in *Collectanea* and Rorie's *Scottish Amulets* in *Correspondence* are typical examples.[370] Peacock lists charms worn by 'farm men' including 'bog oak' for luck and cowrie shells for love; Rorie lists 'present day survivals of amulets for protection against diseases' such as red silk wristlets against rheumatism. Peacock refers to 'luck' and 'love-magic'; Rorie refers to witches and fairies as sources of disease. Such practices fell within Tylor and Frazer's definitions of 'magic', but the writers themselves used the term sparingly. It seems that the greater the theoretical inclinations of the writer, the more they were inclined to use the overarching concept of 'magic', presumably following Tylor and Frazer's foregrounding of the term.

In a history of the MAA published to celebrate its centenary, the anthropologist Edmund Leach opined that 'it is really only during the last decade or so that most Cambridge anthropologists have fully conceded that anthropology is concerned

[370] M. Peacock, 'Amulets used in Lincolnshire', *Folklore* (Vol. 19, No. 1, 1908), 87-88; D. Rorie, 'Scottish Amulets, *Folklore* (Vol. 20, 1909), 231-2.

with material things as well as ideas'.[371] Leach seems to have overlooked the fact that early anthropologists like Haddon were highly object-focussed and that much research was museum-based during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[372] The concern that he mentions was, in fact, a renewal of academic interest that had peaked a century before, resulting in the foundation of the museum. English amulets had eventually entered the public domain under the auspices of early anthropology, rather than through the 'folklore' museum that never happened.

5.4. Collecting the World: Owen and Starr

Although the 1890s was a pivotal decade for collecting material folklore, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that the FLS acquired the collections it prized most, each of which had a strongly magical element. Summing up in his 1928 Presidential Address, Arthur Robinson Wright referred to the 'Unfinished Tasks of the Folklore Society' in time for its (golden) 'Jubilee Congress'. Among the FLS' previous 'good resolutions', he listed 'the fitting of the Society with a permanent habitation, a library, and a museum, which was under consideration thirty-six years ago'.[373] Wright recalled that

> the formation of a museum was suggested by Col. R.C. (now Sir Richard) Temple so long ago as 1886, and was begun tentatively with a single case at Cambridge. It now includes, besides many miscellaneous and other

[371] E. Leach, 'Foreword', in V. Ebin, D. A. Swallow and E. R. Leach, "*The Proper Study of Mankind": great anthropological collections in Cambridge* (Cambridge: CUMAA, 1984), 2.
[372] See Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, and S. Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994), 13.
[373] Wright, 'Presidential Address', 24.

> objects, two very valuable and important collections of which illustrated catalogues have been published by the Society as 'extra volumes'.

Wright was referring to the Owen collection, mentioned above, and to the Mexican folklore collection of Professor Frederick Starr (1858-1933), an early anthropologist at the University of Chicago, which comprises nearly 600 items.[374] Although the 'folklore' listings for earlier years emphasise British and Irish material, collecting peaked with the deposit of the Starr and Owen collections. Owen's material was donated to the FLS in 1901 (also the year in which Haddon was appointed Lecturer in Ethnology at Cambridge) before being transferred to the MGLA, and had a strong component of 'magic and religion', with more than half (60 out of 113 accessions) now classified as such.[375]

Starr acquired his collections during his late 1890s anthropological expeditions to Southern Mexico and documented them in his *Catalogue*.[376] It is perhaps surprising that Starr's folkloric material did not stay in the Walker Museum at the University of Chicago, where he worked from 1892 until 1923, or go to the Field Museum, to which he sold most of his Mexican collections. Instead, it was donated to the London-based FLS in 1898 and placed on 'permanent loan' [*sic*] at the MGLA in 1905. Starr's collection at Cambridge includes typical secular

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[374] Wright, 'Presidential Address', 25, referring to F. Starr, *Catalogue of a Collection of Objects Illustrating the Folklore of Mexico*, (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1899); M. A. Owen, *Folklore of the Musquakie Indians Indians of North America, and Catalogue of Musquakie Beadwork and Other Objects in the Collection of the Folklore Society* (London: David Nutt, 1904).

[375] These include a variety of ritual artefacts but just three classified as 'charm' or 'medicine'.

[376] Starr, 'Catalogue'. Starr's publications on Mexican ethnography contain a mass of detail on ethnography, folklore and material culture: 'Notes Upon the Ethnography of Southern Mexico', *Proceedings of the Davenport Academy of Sciences* (Vol. 8, 1899-1900, 1901), 102-198, (Vol. 9, 1901-1903, 1902), 62-180; *In Indian Mexico: A Narrative of Travel and Labor* (Chicago: Forbes and Company, 1908). He also self-published a number of pamphlets and papers including *Mexican Popular Medicine* and *Popular Celebrations in Mexico* (privately published, no dates).

folkloric material such as popular toys, games and entertainment, as well as Day of the Dead material now classified as 'magic and religion' in the museum's catalogue. It seems that his material was divided into 'folklore', which went to Cambridge, and 'anthropology' (substantially costume and textiles) which remained in Chicago.[377] These elements appear to have been defined, respectively, as 'survivals' in 'modern' societies and the 'traditional' life of indigenous Mexicans. At the time, Starr's material held great interest to folklorists because it was considered to demonstrate the continuity of earlier Spanish practices and, as we have seen, Catholic traditions were widely considered to be survivals of ancient paganism.[378] In a more recent analysis, the American anthropologist Donald McVicker consigns Starr to the history of anthropology, referring to him as a 'disciplinary ancestor' and comparing him unfavourably with Franz Boaz, a 'father' of American cultural anthropology, largely because of Starr's emphasis on material collecting.[379]

Ironically, this enthusiasm seems to have marked the end of the Folklore Collection's heyday. The apex of folklore collecting by the FLS and MGLA lasted for little over a decade. 'Folk-Lore' and 'European Ethnology' were listed adjacently in the museum's Annual Reports until 1909. In 1908, an appeal launched by the museum for a new building emphasised its collections' potential for teaching and research. In support of this, a 'List of the More Important

[377] Starr's collection at Chicago's Field Museum includes about 700 Mexican ethnographic items.
[378] F. T. Elworthy mentioned Starr's collection in *Horns of Honour: and other studies in the by-ways of archaeology* (London: John Murray, 1900), 143, commenting that 'mystery plays in which the devil performs a principal part, are still kept up and commonly practiced in Mexico… The Folklore Society have recently deposited at Cambridge a large number of the objects connected with these plays'.
[379] D. McVicker, 'Parallels and Rivalries: Encounters between Boas and Starr', *Curator: The Museum Journal* (Vol. 32, 1989), 212–28.

Collections' was published, including the FLS', demonstrating the esteem with which its international collections were held at this time.[380] In a letter of December 1909, the FLS' Secretary requested an annotated catalogue of the Society's items housed at the museum, writing that 'I am compiling a list of objects which have from time to time been exhibited at the meetings of the Society and a supplemental list showing which of them have been presented to the exhibition by the society'.[381] From 1910, when the museum moved into its new building on Downing Street and changed its name, folklore accessions were no longer listed separately in its Annual Reports. Haddon's book *History of Anthropology*, in which he summed up his views on the place of folklore within anthropology, was published in the same year. By 1911, the FLS had established an 'Exhibits and Museums Committee', which reported that 'two table-cases in which objects lent for exhibition may be placed have been obtained' and provided a list of objects 'now placed in the Museum of Archaelogy and Ethnology at Cambridge'.[382] This small Committee included both Lovett and the wealthy American art collector Walter Leo Hildburgh (1876-1955), both of whom were prolific collectors of charms and amulets, but Haddon was not listed among its members.[383] Concern with exhibiting amulets had shifted, it seems, from theoreticians to collectors themselves.

[380] University Association, *New Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology: An Appeal* (Cambridge: University Association, 1908), 7-8.
[381] MAA WO6/1/6.
[382] C. S. Burne, 'The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Council', *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 22, No. 1, Mar. 1911), 7-11. Although it would stretch the definition of the term 'table case', it is possible that the two identical cases referred to are those that were still used as the Folklore Cabinet until 2020 and,for the Beck Bead Collection until 2019.
[383] For biographical information on Hildburgh see B., H.A.L. and E.E., 'Obituaries: Dr W.L. Hildburgh', *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 67, 1956). 49.

These table-cases seem to have sated the FLS' desire for a presence in the museum, as the next and last separate listing for 'Folk-Lore' in the museum's Annual Report appeared in 1920. It comprised only 'two drift-net pole-corks with in[s]et coins for luck in fishing', sourced via Lovett, as the tide of acquisitions began to subside.[384] In the same year, Haddon was appointed deputy curator when the Museum's first curator, Baron Anatole von Hügel (1854-1928), became ill, and until Louis Clarke took over in 1922.[385] The museum was seen by the University as 'becoming increasingly an adjunct to teaching' and was absorbed into the Board of Archaeological and Anthropological Studies.[386] The final accessions of English amulets arrived at the museum in 1923: a holed stone to protect against nightmares and a fossil ammonite carved with a snake's head, both deposited by the FLS. Nevertheless, accessions categorised as 'folklore' appeared sporadically into the 1930s and finally faded away with the onset of the Second World War and with Haddon's death in 1940.[387] It appears that the 'Folk-Lore Section' at the museum began and ended with Haddon's association with Cambridge, if not with his formal employment by the museum, and that the acquisition of English amulets by the museum substantially coincided with the life of the 'Folk-Lore Section'.

5.5. A closer look at the Folklore Cabinet

[384] Antiquarian Committee, 'Thirty-fifth Annual Report of the Antiquarian Committee to the Senate with lists of accessions for the year 1920', *Cambridge University Reporter* (University of Cambridge: MAE, 1920), 9.
[385] Between 1910 and 1919 the MAA's *Annual Report* became less systematic due to von Hügel's illness, building works, and the First World War. Haddon became honorary keeper of the Pacific collections on von Hügel's retirement in 1925.
[386] A.C. Haddon, *A Brief History of the Study of Anthropology at Cambridge*, unpublished typescript, MAA Box 23, mm1/1/1. (1923), 2.
[387] The last item accessioned as 'folklore' was a 'cheese horse' from an Italian saint's festival, deposited by a Marian C. Harrison via Haddon not long before his death in 1940 (MAA Z 45314).

At the time of my survey in 2007, all of the MAA's remaining English amulets were housed in one drawer in the Folklore Cabinet. I therefore refer to the Cabinet here in the present tense. As I complete this thesis in 2020, however, the Cabinet's contents are in the process of being redistributed across the MAA's anthropology collections according to their geographical origins, while the Cabinet itself is soon to be transferred to the Museum of British Folklore, together with any residual historical associations. This is somewhat ironic, given the current academic and wider cultural resurge of interest in magic, including its material forms. Like the earlier dismantling of the FLS' collections as a coherent whole, this separation further masks the historical contexts in which these objects were collected. The discussion here, therefore, provides a valuable record of the Cabinet's contents and the historical significance of their juxtaposition.

A dark wooden display case with thirty small drawers and a glass display vitrine on top, the Cabinet contains over a thousand tiny objects (figure 5.1 a-b). These consist largely, though not exclusively, of charms and amulets from England, Britain and other parts of the world, drawn together by disparate collectors. The Cabinet offers an opportunity to consider the marginal position of English, British and European material within the MAA's world anthropology collections. The drawers are organised geographically, each containing objects from a particular country or region. Their geographical pattern virtually reverses that of the anthropology collection, with British and European objects outnumbering

those from elsewhere in the world.[388] Whereas the folklore collection as a whole is dominated by material from outside Europe, namely the Starr and Owen collections, more accessions in the Cabinet come from the British Isles (81) than from any other country except Italy (90). These include 52 from England, 25 from Ireland, three from the Isle of Man and one from Scotland (a 'harvest maiden' from Frazer himself), all of which were accessioned between 1906 and 1921.[389] The English items include bent coins, dried potatoes, bones and holed stones, moles' feet and horse brasses (*figure 5.2*). Thirty-two of these come from just 13 named sources, including Haddon himself, Ridgeway, E.C. Quiggin, A.R. Wright and the Reverend F.C. Marshall, as well as the FLS as an institution.[390] At least some of these people were active folklorists and could perhaps have collected the items as part of the UK Ethnographic Survey.

Two names stand out as being potentially influential in the Cabinet's formation, those of Haddon and Ridgeway. Haddon's involvement with the Cabinet can be surmised by contextualising it within the MAA's broader folklore collections, and by comparing it with Haddon's published interests and with the Horniman's collections, with which he was also involved. Neither the museum's Annual

[388] Listed in descending order numerically, these are: Europe (386 accessions, Mediterranean, Western Europe including the British Isles, Eastern Europe), Asia (117 accessions, Western Asia, Eastern Asia), Africa (37 accessions, North Africa including Egypt, West Africa, East Africa), the Americas (North America, Mexico) and Oceania (represented by just one accession from Tahiti). Almost all of these are charms, amulets or 'magical' items. These figures are extrapolated from database records exported in August 2007. I audited the Cabinet's contents between 2002 and 2005, so the figures give an accurate snapshot of the Cabinet's contents during those years only. Until the Cabinet's contents were re-housed in 2020, however, artefacts were no longer (as a rule) added or removed, so the numbers are unlikely to have changed significantly after 2007.
[389] MAA AR.1889.49 (harvest maiden). At the time of my survey, two of the English items were missing. According to database records, they were deposited by the FLS in 1923. They could perhaps have been transferred to the PRM or MoC with other FLC material at a later date.
[390] Edmund Crosby Quiggin (1875-1920) was a professional linguist and the husband of Alison Hingston Quiggin, Haddon's biographer.

Reports nor its catalogued archives reveal when the Cabinet was first put together, indeed it appears to be a palimpsest. The catalogue numbers of its contents, however, provide us with clues as to how and the collection within it was formed.[391] It is tempting to assume that the Cabinet is the FLS' original display case, but the details do not match. Although the MAA first dedicated a display case to folklore in 1896, it was described as having 'plate-glass shelves', which the Cabinet does not.[392]

Just three of the Cabinet's objects were catalogued during the nineteenth century, the earliest (Frazer's 'harvest maiden') in 1889. At the other end of the timescale, a small number of objects were accessioned in the 1940s and 50s, indicating that even if Haddon was involved the Cabinet's its initial formation, it was still a work in progress after his death. It outlived Haddon as a changing and growing entity, to which further amulets and other small magical objects were added right up until the 1980s, when it was taken off display and came to be viewed as an artefact in its own right. During redisplay and backlog documentation projects in the 1970s and 1980s, many uncatalogued objects were finally accessioned, some of which may have been added to the Cabinet. Contemporary photographs show that it was on public view prior to being removed to storage in 1989 during a major redevelopment of the anthropology galleries. Oral testimony from present and former MAA employees confirms that it had been on display for as long as anyone can remember.

[391] At the time of my survey, more than half of the Cabinet's accessions were undated, probably indicating that they entered the MAA before cataloguing became more systematised. Objects found unaccessioned at the museum were given 'Z' accession numbers between 1923 and 1992 (see MAA Documentation Manual, working copy). I refer to numbers of accessions rather than numbers of objects because each accession can include multiple objects.
[392] Antiquarian Committee, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 12.

Two undated lists headed 'large boxes' and 'small boxes' itemise some objects which were in the Cabinet when I examined it, such as Haddon's 'Holy Well Remnants from Donegal', as well as others that were not, such as feather charms from New Guinea.[393] From the lists we can infer that these items were associated before they entered the Cabinet, and that non-European charms were later integrated — for the most part — into the mainstream anthropology collections, while European objects were categorised separately as 'folklore'. The Cabinet's contents, then, reflect both a typically folkloric interest in British material and the anthropological practice of cross-cultural comparison. A large proportion of the museum's British anthropology collections are associated with magic and are stored in the Cabinet, which appears to have been formed as an exercise in drawing comparisons between amulets and other 'magical' objects from around the world through their physical juxtaposition. However, by no means all of the MAA's items from elsewhere in the world now classified as 'magic and religion' have been classified as 'folklore' or incorporated into the Cabinet.

More than fifty people are named as sources for the international items in the Cabinet as a whole, but catalogue records often do not specify whether these names refer to donors, previous owners or collectors, or the objects' original users. More than half of the objects are attributed to just six sources — Ridgeway (121 accessions), Miss E. Allen (58), Haddon (40), the anthropologist Edith

[393] MAA Z 46333.

Durham (33), Lovett (19) and the marine specialist James Hornell (19).[394] Smaller groups of objects were sourced from well-known academics and amateur collectors including E.C. Quiggin, G.H.S. Bushnell, F.W. Hasluck and A.R. Wright, as well as from the FLS itself as an institution.[395] Finally, 36 people are named as the source for just one object each. These include Department members such as A.A. Bevan and W.H.L. Duckworth, anthropologists such as Ethel Lindgren, and famous academics including Frazer and Murray.[396] These statistics suggest that the objects were obtained through professional and social networks. By contrast, only one original user is named and specifically identified as such — one 'W. Hockliffe, mail driver on the St. Neots to Cambridge route', from whom the museum obtained a holed flint used for protection against accidents (*figure 5.3*).[397] This pattern gives the impression that the objects themselves were considered by their collectors or those who commissioned them to be of greater interest than the people who made and used them.

5.6. Collecting Europe: Durham and Ridgeway

[394] James Hornell (1865-1949) was a folklorist, colonial civil servant, and specialist in anthropology and zoology relating to the sea. The Cabinet contains his collection of personal ornaments and other charms from North Africa and the Middle East, including 'hands of Fatima' and blue glass beads against the evil eye. Edith Durham will be introduced later in the thesis.
[395] Geoffrey Hext Sutherland Bushnell (1903-1978) was an archaeologist of the Americas and a curator at the MAA from 1948 until his death. A. R. Wright was a professional patent officer and FLS President from 1927-8. He specialised in English folklore and worked towards the Society's project to amplify John Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, originally published in 1777 but later as J. Brand with H. Ellis and H. Bourne, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: chiefly illustrating the origin of vulgar and provincial customs, ceremonies, and superstitions* (London: Bohn, 1849).
[396] Anthony Ashley Bevan (1859-1933) was a Professor of Arabic at Cambridge and a benefactor to the MAA. Wynfrid Lawrence Henry Duckworth (1870-1956) was a Reader in Human Anatomy at Cambridge. Ethel John Lindgren (1905-1988) was an American anthropologist who recorded Inner Mongolian life in the 1920s and 30s and later lectured at Cambridge.
[397] MAA E 1906.302.

Although Haddon was evidently an important agent in the Folklore Collection's formation, Professor Sir William Ridgeway (1853-1926) is named as the immediate source for a quarter of all the accessions in the Cabinet itself, most of which were accessioned as part of his 1927 bequest. The majority of these are charms from the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, including a high proportion of the Cabinet's Eastern European (largely Albanian) material.[398] One drawer contains exclusively crescent-shaped objects from around the world, spanning from Turkey and India to North America (*figure 5.4*). According to Haddon, it was 'largely through Ridgeway's efforts' that the Board of Anthropological Studies was established 1904.[399] The fact that Ridgeway's collections were accessioned after his death, however, suggest that Haddon, rather than Ridgeway, is more likely to have been responsible for the Cabinet's formation.[400]

Ridgeway was a Classical scholar and Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge from 1892.[401] He was President of the AI from 1908-1910 and like Haddon, he was a member of the BAAS. Like Pitt-Rivers' and Balfour's, his collections reflect his concern less with evolution and 'survivals', but with tracing the diffusion and development of objects and symbols through time and space. His books demonstrate that he was interested in the temporal and geographical 'origins' of

[398] The bequest comprised almost 4,000 accessions, the majority of which were archaeological.
[399] Haddon, *A Brief History* of the Study of Anthropology at Cambridge, unpublished typescript, MAA Box 23, mm1/1/1.
[400] It remains possible that Ridgeway's collections were housed at the museum before being officially bequeathed.
[401] This biographical information is from A. Petch, C. Wingfield and C. Gosden, 'William Ridgeway', *England: The Other Within*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/england/noajax-individuals315f.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 30 Sept. 2015. Ridgeway's most significant books, *The Origin of Metallic Currency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892) and *The Early Age of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901) were on Classical archaeological subjects. He was also involved in anthropological circles.

things, from coins and weights to the thoroughbred horse.[402] He paid tribute, however, to Frazer's methodology and like Frazer, he made comparative use of both archaeological and anthropological examples, for which Haddon admired him.[403] Like Haddon's, Ridgeway's main method of collecting was to gather material from travellers and commercial dealers which supported his theories, maintaining social networks in pursuit of his studies.[404] Günther, founder of the History of Science Museum at the University of Oxford and later a curator of natural history at the BM, showed interest in Ridgeway's research into the *cavallo marino* or Neapolitan sea-horse charms.[405] Both Haddon and Günther had studied marine biology in Naples for a time, and they too became interested in charms having travelled there to study natural science.[406] Frederick Starr, too, can also be linked with Ridgeway's worldwide hunt for crescent symbols.[407]

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[402] See, for example, W. Ridgeway, *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905).

[403] See, for example, W. Ridgeway, *The Relationship of Anthropology to Classical Studies* (London: publisher unknown, 1909).

[404] Archives and records for many of the objects give an intermediary collector's name as well as Ridgeway's. Archival material includes a draft of Ridgeway's own and copies of others' papers on the subject, including MAA W10/2/5: W. Ridgeway, 'The Origins of the Turkish Crescent', *JRAI* (Vol. 38, 1908), 241-258 and Plates 19-23); Wheeler Cuffe 1902, MAA W10/2/2: O. Wheeler Cuffe, 'King John's Badge, "Star and Crescent"', reprinted from *The Journal of the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (Part 1, Vol. 32, 1st Quarter, 1902); 1916, MAA W10/2/9: W. L. Hildburgh, 'Notes on some Cairene Personal Amulets', *Man* (No. 52, Jun. 1916) 81-82 and Plate F. The archive also includes piles of annotated photographs of objects like the ones in the Cabinet (MAA W10/2/4, W10/2/6 and W/2/10). There are also letters from a variety of correspondents in an envelope marked 'letters to Ridgeway concerning boars' tusks and crescent shaped jewellery 1903-1918' (W10/2/3) and further correspondence on this and similar topics (W10/3/1-1907).

[405] Simcock, *Günther*. Günther also collected 'sprig of rue' charms, the symbolism of which he examined in his paper 'The Cimaruta: its structure and development', *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 16, No. 2, 1905), 132–161. There are over 30 of these in the Cabinet, all of them donated by a Miss Allen (who has not been identified) in 1917.

[406] See A.H. Quiggin, *Haddon, the Head Hunter: a short sketch of the life of A.C. Haddon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1942), 53.

[407] A letter from the director of the Field Museum refers to a North American ornament with a crescent of eagle talons in Starr's Chicago collection (MAA W10/2/6).

Ridgeway's most frequently cited sources, however, are Edith Durham (1863-1944), who supplied him with Albanian material, and the Classical scholar Frederick William Hasluck (1878-1920), from whom he obtained Greek and Cypriot artefacts.[408] Extensive correspondence between Ridgeway and Durham demonstrates that she too was interested in tracing the use of symbols through space and time. By contrast, both Haddon and Balfour traced change and development in design elements from an evolutionary perspective, rather than from the diffusionist angle that Ridgeway and Durham took.[409] Herle explains that Haddon 'cautioned against diffusionist speculations which were led astray by superficial similarities found in designs originating from different regions'; instead he 'emphasised the importance of demonstrating specific historical links'.[410] Haddon openly criticised Lovett on this matter but he was satisfied with Ridgeway's rigour, praising his application of anthropology's 'comparative method' to the Classics.[411] Like those of many less well-known collectors, the objects that Ridgeway gathered for his own theoretical purposes, having been previously field-collected by the likes of Durham, were subsumed into the Cabinet's comparative scheme.

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[408] Ridgeway's correspondence includes a selection of letters from Durham to himself and to the MAA's curator Louis Clarke, mostly on the theme of crescent symbolism in Albania (MAA W10/3/4). Durham was a prolific self-taught anthropologist who published several books on her work in the Balkans: *The Burden of the Balkans* (London: Nelson, 1905); *High Albania* (London: E. Arnold, 1909); *Some Tribal Origins, laws, and customs of the Balkans* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928). Hasluck was an English antiquarian, historian, and classical archaeologist. He travelled widely in the Balkans with his wife Margaret.

[409] See A. C. Haddon, *Evolution in Art* (London: W. Scott, 1895) and H. Balfour, *The Evolution of Decorative Art: An essay upon its origin and development as illustrated by the art of modern races of mankind* (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1893). Ridgeway's extensive correspondence on the themes of diffusion and spatial and temporal distribution includes, for example, one concerning the distribution of bark whistles throughout the British Isles (MAA W10/3/17).

[410] Herle, 'Life-histories', 85.

[411] A. C. Haddon, 'Crescent Charms (Plate II)', *Folklore* (London: David Nutt, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1903); Haddon, *History*, 133.

5.7. A closer look at Haddon

Haddon's published writing, as well as documentary evidence, point towards his involvement in the Folklore Cabinet's formation. His interest in charms and amulets is clear in his better-known work on the Torres Straits as well as that on folklore. Anita Herle informs us that 'a large variety of wooden and stone "charms" were prevalent in the Eastern Islands of the Torres Strait' and that 'Haddon became increasingly obsessed with these figures, believing them to be crucial to understanding social organisation and the evolution of religion'.[412] Although Haddon's interest in objects connected with what he termed 'magic and fetishism' was international, his Torres Strait charms have been incorporated into the MAA's wider 'anthropology' collections rather than the Folklore Cabinet. On the other hand, the few items in the Cabinet likely to have been field-collected by Haddon himself are British. These include Irish and English artefacts (from England, commercial bullroarers used in Norfolk and the contents of a Cornish wishing well).[413] Notes and documents formerly in the Cabinet, largely consisting of lists and letters to Haddon from donors and other correspondents, also point towards his involvement.[414] They testify to his interest in both Tylor's theory of 'survivals' and what was later termed 'salvage ethnography'.[415] Most of them refer to amulets and other 'survivals' from Britain and further afield, especially

[412] Herle, 'Life Histories', 104.
[413] Those for which Haddon is named as a definite source originate from Europe, Asia and the USA, as well as England and Ireland. Bullroarers held particular significance for Haddon; for him, they demonstrated 'a survival whose function had changed' from 'a sacred religious object in primitive societies' to 'a child's toy' in Western Europe (Urry, 'Zoology', 67).
[414] MAA FG1/7/1. These are noted as being from the Cabinet, but it is not known when they were removed.
[415] J.W. Gruber is said to have coined the term 'salvage ethnography' much later, in 'Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology', *American Anthropologist*, New Series (Vol. 72, No. 6, Dec. 1970), 1289-1299. Salvage ethnography refers to collecting and recording elements of culture in the belief that they are about to die out.

the Mediterranean. A typical letter, from Edwin Ransom of Bedford in 1902, concerns corn figures and says 'I know these old customs – especially as their observance becomes disjointed (i.e. not thoroughly and closely kept up) — become corrupted and their origin entirely covered or altered which is worse still'.

The objects that Haddon kept at home sound much like those in the Cabinet. We learn from Quiggin that Haddon's home was crowded with interesting people, and that intriguing objects were gathered and displayed there. His social circle included folklorists Mary Kingsley, Andrew Lang and Thomas Hardy among others.[416] Quiggin describes how on Sunday afternoons, after taking tea, Haddon invited his guests to his study to look at his things — 'he would bring out his cases with Mediterranean charms against the evil eye; votive offerings from Irish rag wells; queer currencies from Africa, China or Borneo and skulls from all parts of the world; there was always something new and interesting. The whole house was an inspiration'.[417] Apart from the skulls (which would have fallen into the contemporary category of 'anthropology' rather than 'ethnology' or 'folklore'), all of these object types are represented in the Cabinet (figure 5.6).

The extent to which the intentions of the curator are taken on board by the audience is a moot point. The objects gathered by Haddon had (and continue to have) the potential to generate alternative interpretations. We cannot know how

[416] Quiggin, *Haddon*, 65-66 and 127-128. Kingsley was involved with both the Cambridge and Oxford museums — see T. Cadbury, 'A Trader in Central Africa: the Dennett Collection at Exeter', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (Vol. 20, 2008), 109-119.
[417] Quiggin, *Haddon*, 127-128.

visitors to Haddon's home reacted to his exhibits. It seems probable that his guests liked to think that they were broadening their scientific minds rather than ogling exotic curiosities. However, perhaps Haddon's social circle too — and even the man himself — experienced 'lower' as well as 'higher pleasures' as they viewed the charms, 'queer currencies' and 'skulls from all parts of the world' that he kept in his home and later transferred to museums. Did they feel scientifically enlightened, as he seems to have hoped, or something more akin to the frisson of curiosity we might expect of those who see his holed stone from the Torres Strait at the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic (see Chapter 8)?

The Cabinet can be closely compared with the Horniman's collection of charms and amulets, with which Haddon was also involved. For example, three of the Cabinet's English amulets — a hare's foot, a 'liver stone' and a 'cramp nut' — were purchased by Quiggin for two shillings each from the dealer A.W. Rowlett of St. Neots, who was also a significant source for the Horniman's English amulets.[418] Nicky Levell describes how, as 'advisory curator' to the Horniman between 1901 and 1915, Haddon's mission was to transform the private museum of Frederick John Horniman (1835-1906) from a 'collection of "curios" into a logically arranged, didactic, educational museum incorporating both natural and social evolution'.[419] He dismissed the existing curator, Richard Quick, and completely redisplayed the museum, aiming to change it from a curiosity cabinet to a temple of learning. Levell describes how Haddon — in turn influenced by Pitt-Rivers and Tylor — tried to sweep away the interests of the museum's founder in the curious and aesthetic qualities of objects, and had the

[418] This inferred from a business invoice for this transaction, MAA FG1/7/1.
[419] Levell, 'Illustrating Evolution', 260-261.

museum displays re-organised along evolutionary lines. He organised its ethnographic displays into five sections, one of which was 'Magic and Religion', which was in turn subdivided into 'organised religion' versus 'magic and primitive religion'. Levell tells us that

> Magic was represented in a large table case, there was a 'special series' illustrating the principles of sympathetic, homeopathic and contagious magic based on Tylor's classification. In this case was a comparative display of amulets, talismans and objects used in divination… The inclusion of certain elements of British society under 'primitive religion' reflected Haddon's inclusion of 'Folklore' in anthropology's remit.[420]

It will be seen from this description that Haddon's Horniman displays, like the MAA's Folklore Cabinet, closely mirrored the contents of Haddon's 1910 book *Magic and Fetishism*. Although it was evidently a subject of particular significance for him, however, 'magic and religion' was not the biggest category of objects collected by Haddon for the Horniman.[421] Considering his motivations for encompassing European material, Levell explains that 'whereas anthropology constructed the "native savage" of the far-flung colonies as the primitive other, folklore constructed the more proximate, European rural peasantry and the *lumpenproletariat*, as the other within', a phrase later used to subtitle the PRM's Anthropology of Englishness project mentioned above.[422] Haddon may have wanted his displays to put across a scientific message, but audiences could have

[420] Levell, 'Illustrating Evolution', 266.
[421] From Byrne's statistics we can see that 'magic' made up just 5% of the objects purchased by Haddon from dealers and auction houses in 1904-05, for example ('Trials and Traces', 317).
[422] Levell, 'Illustrating Evolution', 266. Here, she coins the phrase 'the other within', later used by the PRM as the title for a major research project into its English collections.

continued to be intrigued by the aesthetic and curious attributes of the objects, or felt drawn to believe in their magical qualities.

Recent re-assessments of Haddon and his collections — those by Sandra Rouse, Anita Herle, Nicky Levell and Sarah Byrne — discuss where he stood in relation to contemporary academic attitudes to collecting, curating and museums.[423] Douglas compares 'the top-heavy science exemplified by [Tylor's] *Primitive Culture*' with 'one built on facts produced by practical *Notes and Queries* users, such as Haddon'.[424] Herle and Rouse, in their 1998 edited volume commemorating the centenary of Haddon's second Torres Strait expedition, argue that the expedition marked 'a clear break in anthropology between the amateur and the antiquarian of the nineteenth century, and the development of the professional anthropologist who combines field-based observation with theoretical analysis'.[425] By considering the charms, amulets and 'fetishes' that Haddon collected and the words he wrote about them, we can assess whether his work on folklore and magic bears out this claim. I suggest that this break was less evident in his earlier Irish expedition, or in his later book *Magic and Fetishism*, than Herle and Rouse claim for his Torres Strait expedition.

[423] Rouse, *Ethnology*; Herle, 'Life-histories', 77-105; 'Illustrating Evolution', 266; Byrne, 'Trials and Traces'.
[424] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 107.
[425] Herle and Rouse, *Cambridge*, 18. Steve Mullins asserts, on the other hand, that Haddon 'never made a clear break with the evolutionary paradigm that dominated nineteenth-century anthropology' — my findings would appear to support this view. See S. Mullins, 'Haddon, Alfred Cort (1855–1940)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *adb.anu.edu.au/biography/haddon-alfred-cort-10386/text18401* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1996), accessed 7 Jan. 2014.

According to Haddon's biographer Alison Hingston Quiggin, both Frazer and Ridgeway supported his career. This must have been part of their efforts to promote anthropology as a discipline. Quiggin effused that just 'as the name of Tylor is inseparable from Anthropology at Oxford, so is that of Haddon in Cambridge, and the story of his life is also the record of the establishment of the Cambridge Anthropological School'.[426] However, although Haddon lived and worked at the core of the academic establishment, Rouse argues that as a nonconformist he had to 'transcend the constraints of religion and class which contributed to his initial marginal status'.[427] Although he was born to a middle-class family (his father was a printer and Baptist deacon) he belonged neither to an established profession nor to the established (Anglican) religion.

We have seen that anthropology as a human science arose from the natural sciences in the context of evolutionary theory. Haddon graduated in natural sciences from Cambridge University in 1875 and began his career in the subject, teaching zoology and curating the university's Zoological Museum from 1879, before becoming a Professor of Zoology at the College of Science in Dublin in 1885. Returning to Cambridge, he was appointed Lecturer in Physical Anthropology from 1893, Lecturer in Ethnology from 1900, and Reader in Ethnology from 1909 until his retirement in 1926. He thus belonged to the first wave of professional anthropologists as human sciences joined natural sciences as university disciplines. Alongside his academic positions, Haddon held honorary roles in museums, as advisory curator to the Horniman between 1901

[426] Quiggin, *Haddon*, 110-111.
[427] Rouse, *Ethnology*, abstract.

and 1915, deputy curator of the MAA from 1920 and 1922, and honorary curator of the MAA's Pacific collections from 1925.[428] Like his contemporaries he was actively involved in scholarly societies, serving at various times as president of Section H (Anthropology) of the BAAS, the RAI, the FLS and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, as well as the Eastern Counties Folk-Lore Society, of which he was a founder member.[429] The political implications of ethnology as opposed to physical anthropology were made clear in Chapter 4. 'Ethnology' had its origins in a more progressive, liberal branch of anthropology, while nonconformist Protestantism was associated with monogenist attitudes to race.

We saw in Chapter 3 that English science grew in the context of English Protestantism rather than in opposition to it. Despite his Protestant background, and although he remained a churchgoer, for Haddon 'science came first' and he took a paternalistic, philanthropic stance to the people he studied.[430] Haddon was inspired by Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, supported by Thomas Henry Huxley and 'waxed wrathful with those who would divide the world's religions into true and false'.[431] Quiggin comments that Haddon 'brought the methods of the biologist into the study of art' and that 'avoiding speculation as far as possible, he collected evidence and let the facts speak for themselves'.[432] Urry points out that 'Haddon, like many of his contemporaries, experienced no

[428] Some of these biographical details are from his obituaries: Anon, 'Alfred Cort Haddon, M.A. Sc.D., F.R.S.', *Folklore* (Vol., 51, No. 3, Sep., 1940), 238-240; 'Dr A.C. Haddon: Anthropologist and Ethnologist', *The Times* (London, 22 Apr. 1940), 3.
[429] Although the BAAS was founded in 1831, Section H was not set up until 1884. The MAA and PRM both opened in the same year. The BAAS' important role in the history of anthropology has been reviewed by Sillitoe, 'Role of Section H'.
[430] Quiggin, *Haddon*, 25.
[431] H.J. Fleure, 'Alfred Cort Haddon. 1855-1940', *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* (London: The Royal Society, Vol. 3, No. 9, Jan., 1941), 461.
[432] Quiggin, *Haddon*, 133.

difficulty in transferring his ideas on biological evolution to the study of culture'.[433] Herle explains how he applied scientific paradigms and methodologies to the study of humankind. Like Darwin, she explains, he paid close attention to incremental changes, but in relation to social systems and designs in decorative art rather than biology.[434] Haddon's book *Evolution in Art*, in which he analysed patterns on objects he collected in Papua New Guinea, is the most substantial example of his use of this approach. In addition, he taught public courses on the evolution of material culture including 'Art, its Social Functions' and the 'History of Designs', and on popular comparative topics including 'Games and Toys'. Like Balfour, he was part of a new generation of professional academics and curators who 'were seen to be dealing with hard data, which, through careful classification and arrangement could reveal truths about the laws governing human history and cultural variation'.[435] As we have seen, collections of material things in museums were considered to provide concrete scientific evidence.

Unlike anthropologists who followed him, Haddon did not insist that fieldwork was the only or even the best way to conduct scientific research, but he did propose that 'the most valuable generalisations are made… when the observer is at the same time a generaliser'.[436] Nevertheless, he was 'adamant that data collection and interpretation took precedence over theorising' and in pursuit of this data, he collaborated with people whose views and methods he did not

[433] Urry, 'Zoology', 66.
[434] Herle, 'Life-histories', 80.
[435] F. Larson, 'Anthropology as Comparative Anatomy? Reflecting on the Study of Material Culture During the Late 1800s and the Late 1900s', *Journal of Material Culture* (London: Sage, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2007), 95.
[436] Haddon, *History*, xii.

necessarily share, notably missionaries.[437] Herle and Rouse concede that although Haddon is credited with appropriating the term 'fieldwork' from the natural sciences to anthropology his 'intensive study of limited areas' in the Aran Islands or even in the Torres Strait did not approach '"intensive" fieldwork in a Malinowskian sense'.[438] It has since been argued that no such radical distinction can be made between the writing of comparative anthropologists and those who engaged in fieldwork; Palmié writes that by the 1980s 'the affinities between Frazerian styles of exposition, and, say, the no less poetically driven self-referential accounts' of Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard 'were ripe for exploration and comparison'.[439]

Even so, Haddon was part of a broader intellectual movement away from monistic, universalising theories towards what Collini *et. al.* have referred to as a 'focus upon practice which licensed, and even demanded, the introduction of local circumstances into the premises of the theory itself'.[440] Haddon's dual approach is evident, Urry points out, in his 'biological study of art', in that 'systematic and theoretical analysis would reveal the universal nature of organisms and designs', whereas 'the careful examination of particular regions or people would prevent the observer confusing the specific with the general'.[441] Haddon divided those who study the 'Science of Religion' into two groups — 'those who make intensive studies of particular forms of religion', either

[437] Herle and Rouse, *Cambridge*, 19.
[438] Herle and Rouse, *Cambridge*, 15-17. The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) is typically credited with instigating the academic tradition of sustained anthropological fieldwork.
[439] Palmié, *Golden Bough*, 5-6.
[440] Collini *et. al.*, *Noble Science*, 286, discuss this development in relation to the philosopher and economist Henry Sidgwick and his approaches to political economy.
[441] Urry, 'Zoology', 69-70.

historical or living, and those who 'attempt, by correlating the mass of material, to discover the fundamental religious conceptions of man, and to trace their subsequent development', amongst whom he included Frazer and Lang.[442] Rather than making a 'clear break' with comparative anthropology, he credited Frazer with 'vast erudition and eloquent writing' and hailed Tylor as 'the founder of the science of Comparative Ethnology'.[443]

Haddon's own fieldwork took the form of touring expeditions in the West of Ireland as well as British New Guinea and the Torres Strait. His substantial report on his systematic work in the Aran Islands gives a glimpse of what he hoped to achieve. The report takes the form of a multi-disciplinary survey, with one of its nine sections entitled 'folk-lore'; it is here that we find references to the phenomena glossed as 'magic' in his other works.[444] The report's focus is on physical anthropology (referred to as 'physiography' and 'anthropography'), but Haddon and his co-author lament that they were unable to research folklore to the same depth, avowedly falling short of their ideal of combining field-observation with theorising. Haddon consciously sacrificed the quality of the data he collected in pursuit of salvage opportunities, urging that 'no time should be lost in recording the vanishing customs and beliefs of old times'.[445] The report's folklore section contains mostly secondary references and lists of familiar customs, 'superstitions' and miscellanea, while the authors begin with

[442] Haddon, *History*, 175.
[443] Haddon, *History*, 158.
[444] A. C.Haddon and C. R. Browne, 'The Ethnography of the Aran Islands, County Galway', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (Vol. 2, 1893), 816-820.
[445] This and the following quote are from Haddon and Brown, *Aran Islands*, 816.

apology, saying that 'concerning this important branch of our enquiry, we regret that our information is so scanty'.

In *Magic and Fetishism*, conversely, Haddon generalised using data based on others' observations to a greater extent than his own. His theoretical approach to material magic followed familiar Victorian comparative methods and evolutionary ideas. Contrasting himself with those who collected objects for their curiosity value, he admired Frazer's comparative approach and prided himself on his modern scientific credentials. Haddon's folklore collections clearly demonstrate that he obtained most of his artefacts from exactly those people who he derided elsewhere as 'the *dilettante*, the historian, the adventurer and the missionary'.[446] He is not named as the primary field collector for any of the English objects at Cambridge or the Horniman, and relied on intermediary collectors whose aims and ambitions sometimes differed sharply from his own. Both amateur antiquarians including Lovett and Elworthy, and professional academics including Ridgeway and Starr, provided him with 'materialised facts' on which he based his theories.[447]

5.8. Haddon, magic and fetishism

Of Haddon's books, those published later in his career — *Magic and Fetishism* (1906) and *History of Anthropology* (1910) — are the most relevant to his work

[446] Haddon, *History*, 1, quoted in Quiggin, *Haddon*, ix.
[447] The term in quotation marks is from Douglas, *Material Culture*, 197.

with folklore and magic in museums.[448] His *History of Anthropology* allows us to understand how he fitted the concept of 'folklore' into his scientific scheme. Haddon saw folklore as an important branch of an all-encompassing 'anthropology', arguing that it should have greater prominence alongside physical anthropology, archaeology, history and other approaches. Like the mid-nineteenth century scholarly societies introduced in Chapter 4, he divided anthropology into its physical and cultural elements, the latter then known as ethnology.[449] Within archaeology, which he considered to be a subdivision of ethnology, he included not only 'the prehistoric periods' but also 'the survival of early conditions in later times (Folklore)'. He argued that elements of what he termed 'primitive' ways of thought survived amongst 'so-called educated people'.[450] He traced the development of anthropology from 'a heap of heterogeneous facts and fancies, the leavings of the historian, of the adventurer, of the missionary — the favourite playground of *dilettanti* of various degrees of seriousness… finally to be replaced by the solid fabric of a coherent whole'.[451] In this objective he followed Frazer, while in his aim to understand social evolution through material things he followed Pitt-Rivers and Tylor. In his 'technological' subsection, he lauded Pitt-Rivers as a 'genius' for being the first to transform museum 'specimens' from 'little more than curiosities or trophies' into 'proofs of stages in the evolution of human thought or handicraft, or links in a chain of

[448] Haddon, *History* and *Magic*. Haddon's *History* was part of a series entitled *A History of the Sciences*. Volumes tackling scientific and religious topics, *Astronomy*, *Chemistry* and *Old and New Testament Criticism*, preceded Haddon's contribution.
[449] For each category, Haddon traced its history and referred to its main writers; the discipline of anthropology had hardly begun and it was already self-reflexive.
[450] Haddon, *History*, 1.
[451] Haddon, *History*, 1, quoted in Quiggin, *Haddon*, ix.

scientific argument indicating the migrations or contacts of peoples'.[452] Haddon must have perceived the folklore collections at the Horniman and the MAA to be parts of this coherent whole.

In *Magic and Fetishism,* one of a series of small books on world religions (excluding Protestantism) aimed at a popular market, Haddon provides us with insights into the theoretical background against which he amassed objects of English and international magic and folklore.[453] *Magic and Fetishism* covers 'the belief in the power of names or words, talismans and amulets, divination, and various practices of public and private magic', all of which are represented in the MAA's folklore collections.[454] Haddon followed Tylor and Frazer in culling examples from all over the world and throughout history, including those sourced from contemporary collectors such as Elworthy and Lovett, in addition to his own observations. For example, he cited Elworthy in his discussion of design elements used in charms against the evil eye, stating that 'the crescent — that is the horned moon — and horns appear to be interchangeable'.[455]

With regards to his British material, Haddon reveals himself to be part of a longer antiquarian tradition, referring to frequently cited examples of popular magic such as those in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* and King James I's

[452] Haddon, *History*, 155.
[453] Haddon, *Magic*. This volume is part of a series comprising 20 books on 'religions ancient and modern', which includes *Animism* by the folklorist Edward Clodd and *Early Christianity* by S.B. Slack. Modern Protestantism is notably absent — these books were about 'others'.
[454] Haddon, 'Prefatory note', *Magic*.
[455] Haddon, *Magic*, 34, referring to Elworthy*, Evil Eye*.

Daemonologie as well as contemporary works such as Leland's *Aradia*.[456] Like many antiquarians and folklorists before him, Haddon argued that certain practices are 'merely the continuance of old customs' and that 'analogous customs are to this day practiced in Britain'.[457] However, like Pitt-Rivers and other contemporary FLS members, he was intent on incorporating these into 'scientific' museum collections as part of a social evolutionary scheme.

Haddon referred to magic as a 'large, comprehensive and at the same time vague subject', but clearly considered 'fetishism' to be a different phenomenon entirely, dividing his book into two distinct sections, 'magic' and 'fetishism'.[458] The distinctions he made between these two categories are subtle, depending on which beliefs the user attached to the object, rather than the form of the object itself. Under 'magic' he included 'certain objects which are variously termed charms, talismans, amulets, or mascots' in which 'virtue resides intrinsically' rather than requiring human action.[459] According to his definition, 'those that transmit qualities or are worn for good luck may be termed *talismans*, while the term *amulet* may be restricted with advantage to those charms which are preventive in their action; but the same charm is in some cases employed for both these purposes'.[460] Haddon further subdivided talismans and amulets into Frazer's categories of contagious (including 'hair, nail parings etc.', 'rag bushes and pin wells' and 'driving nails into trees and stocks') and homeopathic

[456] James I, King of England, *Daemonologie,* (1579); Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, Vol. 8, books 28-32, 1963 [before 79CE]); Leland, *Aradia.*
[457] Haddon, *Magic*, 20.
[458] Haddon, *Magic*, 'Prefatory note'.
[459] Haddon, *Magic*, 29.
[460] Haddon, *Magic*, 29-30. These include stones, items of a specific colour such as red woollen thread and blue beads, boars' tusks and leopards' claws, and 'models or representations of objects', from modern German 'lucky pigs' to the ancient Egyptian Eye of Osiris (*Magic*, 32).

(including 'human effigies to injure or kill people'). Fetishes, by contrast, 'owe their efficacy to an intimate relation with a spiritual being of some kind or other, or with a deity', although 'when this belief is lost the charm becomes a mere talisman or amulet', reverting — as he would see it — from 'religion' to 'magic'.

Haddon contested contemporary dictionary definitions of fetishism as 'the worship of inanimate objects', arguing that 'all cases of Fetishism, when examined, show that the worship is paid to an intangible power or spirit incorporate in some visible form, and that the fetish is merely the link between the worshipper and the object of his worship'.[461] He explained that a 'fetish' usually 'consists of a queer-shaped stone, a bright bead, a stick, parrots' feathers, a root, a claw, seed, bone, or any curious or conspicuous object' which is 'worshipped, prayed to, sacrificed to, talked with, and petted or ill-treated with regard to its past or future behaviour'.[462] Haddon's conclusions may be contrasted with the opinions expressed by his contemporary Andrew Lang in the latter's earlier chapter 'Fetichism and the Infinite'.[463] Whereas Lang characterised fetishism as 'the adoration of odds and ends', Haddon (following Müller, against whom Lang railed) saw it as stemming from a universal 'recognition of the supernatural, the fundamental religious feeling of awe'.[464] Haddon, then, saw fetishism as diametrically opposed to magic and closer to religion, despite appearing similar at a superficial level, with similar artefacts

461 Haddon, *Magic*, 67-68 and 70.
462 Haddon, *Magic*, 73 and 72.
463 A. Lang, *Custom and Myth* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1884), 212-242.
464 Haddon, *Magic*, 92. Lang, on the other hand, argues that 'the germs of the religious sense in early man are developed, not so much by the vision of the Infinite, as by the idea of Power. Early religions, in short, are selfish, not disinterested' (*Custom*, 212-213).

used for similar purposes. There are many worldwide examples of such objects in the MAA's Folklore Cabinet, the Horniman's collections and elsewhere.

Despite their differences, Haddon would surely have agreed with Lang in the latter's chapter on 'Fetichism' that 'if the history of religion and of mythology is to be unravelled, we must examine what the unprogressive classes in Europe have in common with the Australians and Bushmen, and Andaman Islanders'.[465] Like others of their time, both believed that amongst 'cultivated peoples', as Lang put it, it is 'among the least cultivated, among the fishermen, the shepherds of lonely districts, the peasants of outlying lands — in short, among the *people*' that an archaic practice such as fetishism 'will longest hold its ground'.[466] These are the people whose artefacts are represented in the Folklore Cabinet, exposing the archetypically archaic practice of 'magic' within the archetypically rational society of England. Haddon encountered the 'folk' in Ireland and the Torres Strait at around the same time in his life and felt similarly distant from both, commenting in a journal that 'the ordinary Saxon is incapable of understanding the typical Irish', thus placing rational modernity firmly with the 'ordinary Saxon' (presumably himself).[467] According to his obituarist H.J. Fleure 'it was one of his sayings that the distinction between savage and civilised is a false one, that civilised folk have as many vestiges of the past in their minds as in their bodies'.[468] His explicit comparison of biological and cultural evolution is evident

[465] Lang, *Custom*, 241.
[466] Lang, *Custom*, 240.
[467] Fleure's obituary of Haddon considers how Haddon's marine biological work with Irish fishermen led to his interest in 'traditional lore' and laid the foundations for his work with Torres Strait Islanders (Fleure, *Haddon*, 450-453).
[468] Fleure, *Haddon*, 453.

here. As an English man with a Protestant background, Catholic Ireland was the closest to 'home' that Haddon ventured in his published works.[469]

According to Quiggin, Haddon 'was commonly lumped with the generality of anthropologists as pagan, heathen or agnostic — he never claimed to be anything else'.[470] Nevertheless for Haddon, as for Tylor and Frazer, true religion involved worshipping and petitioning a deity rather than (as they saw it) attempting to manipulate them. It is clear which he believed to be superior: in his words, a spell may 'evolve' into a prayer, or 'prayer itself may degenerate into a spell'.[471] This opinion would appear to stem from his own nonconformist background, as he also participated in the longstanding Protestant tradition of comparing Catholic priests to magicians and Catholic artefacts to fetishes, pointing out that that the concept of the 'fetish' itself originally referred to Catholic material.[472] *Magic and Fetishism* makes Haddon's views on Catholicism clear. For example, from Elworthy's book *The Evil Eye*, he cites the reputation of Popes as having 'the fatal influence', and compares priests with sorcerers, relating that certain 'fetishes' used by a Bantu priest are 'doubtless… as effectual as if done by the

[469] See T. Cadbury, 'Sorcerer's Kit, Papua New Guinea', in Jacobs *et. al.*, *Trophies*, 67. Haddon was a member of the Congregational Church, a Reformist branch of Protestantism which was largely responsible for London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries including the Reverend Harry Moore Dauncey, from whom Haddon obtained Papua New Guinean artefacts for his collection. For a full list of Haddon's published words see E. S. Fegan, *Bibliography of A.C. Haddon 1955-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
[470] Quiggin, *Haddon*, 123.
[471] Haddon, 'Magic', 62.
[472] Haddon, *History*, 64. 'Fetish' was a Portuguese term for 'lucky charms and amulets and relics of saints' which was then extended to refer to a form of African religion. The concept of fetishism, then, began by comparing the religious practices of another culture to Catholicism, rather than the other way round. This history has been explored in depth by William Pietz in his papers 'The Problem of the Fetish' I, II and IIIa, published in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology) in 1985, 1987 and 1988 respectively. Anthony Shelton explored the term's shifting meanings in his 1995 exhibition at the BMAG and its eponymous catalogue, *Fetishism*.

Pope himself'.[473] Although material things were central to Haddon's academic studies, he remained suspicious of them in a religious context, so that when he placed cultures on his evolutionary ladder, Catholicism occupied a lower rung than Protestantism. The latter is not represented in the MAA's folklore collections because it ostensibly makes no use of artefacts that could be construed as charms, amulets or fetishes. Lovett's material in the Folklore Cabinet consists exclusively of Catholic souvenirs sold to pilgrims in Lourdes, France (*figure 5.3*), which dovetail with the widespread view shared by Haddon of Catholic practices as 'survivals'.[474]

5.9. Conclusion to Chapter 5

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the institutionalisation of material folk magic, using the FLS' collections of charms and amulets and their connections with those of the MAA and the Horniman as a case study. It has investigated how and why information previously gathered and published in written and pictorial form was increasingly complemented by evidence harvested in material form, in particular through the influence of Tylor and Haddon. The first part of the chapter focussed on the place of material magic at the FLS' 1891 International Folk-Lore Congress in London. It then followed the apex and decline of its institutionalisation at the MAA, showing how this happened concurrently with the development and definition of new museum-based academic disciplines. These in turn grew side-by-side with the creation of

[473] Haddon, *Magic*, 82.
[474] Lovett corresponded with Haddon about these and their purchase by the museum (MAA FG1/7/1).

new professional positions in museums and universities. In the ebb and flow of collecting and publication, the chapter has traced connections between the fields of folklore and anthropology, as well as ethnology and archaeology, and their relationships with shifting definitions of magic.

The second part of the chapter took as its starting point a drawer of English amulets in the MAA's Folklore Cabinet, which led quickly to chains of connections all over the world, past and present, as Gosden and Knowles predicted.[475] An examination of these objects led to a consideration of the MAA's folklore collections more broadly and the extent to which Haddon shaped them. Whereas Starr saw folklore as a separate field from anthropology, and Boas saw anthropology as superseding folklore, Haddon saw folklore and ethnology as part of the all-encompassing anthropology. Whereas Starr's work was based on collecting and Boas eschewed artefacts for theory, Haddon aspired to meld the two. According to Rouse he aimed to close the gap between 'the ethnographer who collected data and the theorist who interpreted it'. However he fell short of this aim in his work on folklore, magic and fetishism.[476] In these areas Haddon gathered data (including objects) provided by himself and by others. Like the immaterial facts amassed by Frazer, whom he admired but criticised, Haddon slotted this material into an overarching evolutionary scheme.[477] As academic interest in comparative anthropology waned, however, this material became

[475] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things,* 241.
[476] Rouse, *Ethnology*, 5.
[477] Haddon and Frazer's similarities and differences were emphasised in a recent play about Haddon, *Head Hunters* by Michael Eaton, broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in February 2014.

marginalised within both the FLS and the MAA, where its collection was not permanently institutionalised nor its study seriously professionalised.

CHAPTER 6. A network of collectors

The previous two chapters looked at core academic institutions in Oxford, London and Cambridge which were influential in the foundation of collecting material magic in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century England. Fascination with material magic did not disappear, however, as academic interest waned. The majority of the English amulets themselves entered museums between the wars, later than the 'pivotal decade' identified by Douglas.[478] We have seen that the 1890s was a formative decade for the institutionalisation of material folklore, and that the FLS' most prized international collections (those of Owen and Starr) were acquired around the turn of the twentieth century. However, if we turn our attention to amulets specifically, we find that the biggest burgeoning of writing on the subject in the FLS' journal occurred between the turn of the century and the First World War. The most prolific collectors were also the most copious contributors to *Folklore* on the subject of charms and amulets, notably Lovett on English amulets and Hildburgh on Mediterranean charms. These collectors provide a bridge of continuing interest in material magic between the first and second folk revivals.

Chapter 6, therefore, takes a small step away from the London and Oxbridge élites discussed so far, to consider the flood of collecting which brought English amulets into museums between the turn of the twentieth century and the Second World War. It examines the motivations of some of the most prolific collectors of English amulets whose names have recurred throughout the thesis, in particular

[478] Douglas, *Material Culture*.

the antiquarian Frederick Thomas Elworthy, the folklore enthusiast Edward Lovett and the Brighton curator Herbert Toms. In doing so, it considers the wider influence of key theoreticians (Frazer, Tylor), curators (Haddon, Balfour) and collectors (Pitt-Rivers, Lovett). Each individual had a different reason for collecting, a different understanding of magic and a different relationship to the academic 'core'. A closer examination of these collectors allows us to consider what influence the 'core' had outside of its own 'ivory tower', the extent to which 'amateur', 'professional' and 'public' camps interacted, and the impacts of collecting itself on shifting attitudes to magic.

6.1. Elworthy and antiquarian folklore

Having examined the roots of collecting worldwide amulets in the proto-anthropological setting of the FLS, I turn to an 'antiquarian folklorist' (to use Dorson's phrase) who focussed his attentions on Mediterranean Europe.[479] Frederick Thomas Elworthy was, after Lovett and Clarke, one of the biggest suppliers of English amulets to museums.[480] Nevertheless, just a small proportion of his collection is British, comprising artefacts collected by himself in South West England and by Lovett in London and Northern Ireland. Most of his material originated from Mediterranean Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. His English material (24 objects in total) is currently housed at two

[479] Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 44.
[480] My survey shows that after Lovett, the 'outsider' who supplied the second largest number of English amulets to museums was in fact Alfred William Rowlett, who sold 58 charms and amulets to the Horniman Museum between 1906 and 1915. Rowlett has been the subject of a recent study by Horniman volunteer Robin Strubb — see 'The charming case of Alfred William Rowlett', *Horniman Museum and Gardens Blog*, www.horniman.ac.uk/get_involved/blog/the-charming-case-of-alfred-william-rowlett (London: Horniman Museum and Gardens, 2016), accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

different institutions. Two of his objects of English magic remain in the MoS: a 'hernia tree' and a holed stone for protection against witchcraft, acquired in 1904 but not accessioned until 1975.[481] The rest of his English material, together with most of his collection, was transferred to the PRM in 1968. This includes objects as varied as holed stone amulets, horse brasses said to be sun and moon symbols with their origins in ancient pagan gods, and Jewish charms from London.[482] The changing fortunes of Elworthy's collection, first at the Somerset County Museum in Taunton, then at the PRM in Oxford, reflect waxing and waning intellectual interest in, and interpretations of, material culture and magic during and between the first and second folk revivals. His remaining material was re-displayed in the Taunton museum in the 2010s as part of a gallery inspired by curiosity cabinets, which showcases a variety of collections held by the museum.

Elworthy was born in Wellington, Somerset, to a well-off, well-connected industrial family of wool manufacturers. He lived as a pillar of the establishment: he married an MP's daughter, became a freemason and sponsored his local Anglican church.[483] Tylor too was from Wellington and the two men knew each

[481] MoS 26/2002. The transferis included contemporary charms from Naples and elsewhere in Italy as well as ancient ceramic lamps and vessels. Elworthy's original display cases, together with about fifty artefacts, were retained by the MoS.
[482] Jewish artefacts include a 'prayer scarf used by Jews in London' (MoS 76/1992/351), again obtained via Lovett, perhaps relating to Elworthy's interest in sacred words as amulets as demonstrated in *Horns*, 389-395. Elworthy's English material at the PRM also encompasses commercial charms, a pierced animal heart and other material from Somerset and the South West and, to a lesser extent, other regions of England. There is a distinct possibility that pieces from London, Whitby and elsewhere were obtained via Lovett as they are typical of the latter's collections.
[483] Brief biographies of Elworthy are provided by T. W. Mayberry, 'Elworthy, Frederick Thomas (1830-1907)', ODNB (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), in which Elworthy is characterised as a 'philologist and antiquary', by Louis Barron in his introduction to a 1958 edition of Elworthy's *Evil Eye* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1958 [1895]), and by Petch, 'Elworthy'.

other.[484] Like Frazer's, Elworthy's private schooling gave him knowledge of the Classics. Like many men of his class he travelled widely. His field-collecting appears to have followed in the tradition of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour; according to his biographer, his 'extensive travels in Spain, Italy, and elsewhere provided him with the materials for his studies of folk magic and popular superstition'.[485] Elworthy was actively involved in a number of local and national learned societies — the Philological Society, the SANHS and the Devonshire Association as well the FLS. He was 'for a considerable time a member of the Council of the Folk-lore Society'[486] but he never wrote for the *Journal* and his collections were never incorporated into the FLS', although they entered museums contemporaneously. Elworthy was perhaps best known for his linguistic work on the Somerset dialect, but his books on the subject differ from his publications on magical artefacts; the former appear to be meticulously scientific, whereas the latter apparently take off on flights of fancy.[487] Both of his books — *The Evil Eye* and *Horns of Honour*, published in 1895 and 1900 respectively — were reviewed in *Folk-Lore*. One reviewer commented of the latter book that Elworthy 'tries to prove too much'; the same could be said of the

[484] At different times, Elworthy and Tylor may have lived in the same house — see A. Petch, 'Frederick Thomas Elworthy', *England: The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Frederick-Thomas-Elworthy.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2011), accessed 9 Aug. 2017.
[485] Mayberry, 'Elworthy'.
[486] E. W. Braebrook, 'Frederick Thomas Elworthy', *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 19, No. 1, 1908), 109.
[487] See E. K. M. Murray*, Caught in the Web of Words: James A.H. Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary*. (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001). Elworthy's books on Somerset dialiect include *An outline of the grammar of the dialect of West Somerset: illustrated by examples of common phrases and modes of speech now in use among the people* (London: Trübner for the English Dialect Society, 1877) and *The West Somerset word-book: a glossary of dialectal and archaic words and phrases used in the West of Somerset and East Devon* (London: Trübner, for the English Dialect Society, 1886).

former.[488] Nevertheless, unlike Lovett, he was honoured with an obituary in *Folk-Lore*, suggesting that he achieved greater respect as a folklorist.[489]

Elworthy's Somerset 'hernia tree' became the subject of *Folk-Lore*'s first paper on English material magic, published in 1896 (five years after the London Congress), in which the folklorist Sidney Hartland compared Elworthy's example with one from Suffolk.[490] In this paper, the preparation and use of the ash sapling is described in detail and Hartland explained how 'about four years later Mr Elworthy procured the tree to be dug up by the roots and deposited in the County Museum in Taunton Castle …'. Hartland also described how he 'obtained a photograph… of the tree in question, as well as of a model prepared under the direction of F. H. Mead, and now also in the Museum, showing the manner in which the ash is opened for the operation'.[491] The tree, the model, the photograph and the story thus became what Douglas has termed 'materialized facts' of the sort which 'a mere observer and noter of facts' (as Elworthy referred to himself) could be expected to obtain. Elworthy stepped beyond observation and gathering facts, though. Both he and Hartland made historical comparisons: Hartland concluded his article by referring the reader to his book *The Legend of Perseus*, 'where further references will be found and a short discussion of the meaning of the rite'.[492] In *The Evil Eye,* the practice is interpreted as a 'survival'

[488] Anon., 'Horns of Honour, and Other Studies in the By-Ways of Archaeology by F. T. Elworthy', review in *Folklore* (Vol. 11, No. 4, Dec. 1900), 402.
[489] Braebrook, 'Elworthy', 109.
[490] E. S. Hartland, 'Cleft Ashes for Infantile Hernia', *Folk-lore* (Vol. 7, No. 3, Sep. 1896), 303-306. The tree itself was acquired in 1892 but not accessioned until 2002.
[491] Hartland, 'Cleft Ashes', 305.
[492] E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus: A Study of Tradition in Story Custom and Belief* (London: David Nutt, 1896), cited in Hartland, 'Cleft Ashes', 306. In this three-volume work Hartland, presumably emulating Frazer, traces incidents found in the classical myth of Perseus from 'the

from 'our Scandinavian forefathers', indicating to Elworthy that 'tree-worship was once an important element in the early religion of mankind, especially of the Aryan stock'.[493] Elsewhere, Elworthy took Somerset anti-witchcraft practices as evidence for a universal belief in the evil eye.[494] His paper *On Perforated Stone Amulets* made direct comparisons between British and Italian holed stones and other perforated objects said to protect people and cattle against the evil eye.[495]

Like Tylor, Elworthy took magic seriously, but his main theoretical interest was the evil eye as the basis of magic, rather than — as for Tylor — magic as the basis of religion. Elworthy criticised Tylor as 'a great authority, who has dealt exhaustively with the subject of the Occult Sciences' yet 'does not even allude to the belief in the evil eye, which we take to be the basis and origin of the Magical Arts'.[496] Many of Elworthy's objects (for example contemporary charms in silver, coral and mother-of-pearl, representing hands, horns and 'Gobbo the hunchback') are similar to those collected by folklorists including Lovett, but Elworthy's framework for interpreting them was different. His English amulets were collected in the context of worldwide amulets against the evil eye, rather than that of 'survivals'. His books focus on ancient Mediterranean civilisations but occasionally stray further afield, referring for example to Haddon's material from Papua New Guinea, but always in support of his argument that symbols (in this case horns) have universal significance.[497] The artefacts within his collection

depths of savagery' to their 'ultimate expression in the most sacred rite of Christian worship' (Hartland, *Legend*, v).
[493] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 105-107.
[494] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 3, for example.
[495] F. T. Elworthy, 'On perforated stone amulets', *Man* (Vol. 3, 1903) 17-20.
[496] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 44.
[497] Elworthy, *Evil Eye,* 59, and 74.

relate closely to the theories he expounded in his books, while the books reveal his understandings of the objects and his rationale for collecting them.

Elworthy's books are the works of a self-conscious amateur who, couched in the tradition of the gentleman antiquarian, apparently felt a growing social expectation that scholarly knowledge should belong to the province of university professionals. He repeatedly (and justifiably) apologised for the inconsistency of his arguments, claiming to be merely 'an observer and noter of the facts' who would leave analysis to 'the savants', amongst whom he included Balfour and Haddon on the evolution of art.[498] Elworthy's writing belies his claim, demonstrating his aspiration to prove that 'all ornament or decoration had originally some distinct signification', namely 'to act as a preventive of the ever-dreaded evil against which all magic was primarily directed'.[499] Decoration, he argued, is universally intended to 'fascinate', thus diverting the glance of the evil eye.[500] At this time of emerging human sciences, collectors like Lovett and Elworthy felt the need to emphasise that they were not theorists, while theoreticians including Tylor and Haddon insisted on material data, including museum objects, as a solid foundation for their ideas. Elworthy seems to have been only partially aware of the 'new ideas… germinating which would raise folklore from an antiquarian to a scientific pursuit'.[501] While debates raged

[498] Elworthy, *Horns*, 9, and *Evil Eye*, 92, referring to Balfour, *Evolution* and Haddon, *Evolution*.
[499] Elworthy, *Horns*, 306.
[500] Elworthy, *Horns*, 306. It is instructive here to contrast earlier folkloric and later anthropological ways of thinking about similar themes. Elworthy's analysis of art on Mediterranean canoe-prows in *The Evil Eye* (134) can be compared with that of the influential anthropologist Alfred Gell on Trobriand canoe-prows; in some ways Elworthy's proposition — that art protects by 'fascination' — was a precursor to Gell's theory that technology 'enchants' proposed in his paper 'The Technology of Enchantment', in Coote and Shelton, *Anthropology*, 44.
[501] Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 87.

around him between comparative mythologists led by Müller and 'the social evolutionary school' led by Tylor and Lang, Elworthy used ideas inconsistently from both.[502] Unlike those of Lang, whose *Custom and Myth* is a consistent invective against Müller's theories and in favour of Tylor's, Elworthy's lines of thought are contradictory and difficult to follow.[503] For Elworthy, magic was a central concept, but it was the early anthropologists who gave 'magic' a new meaning with claims to universality.

Unlike Lovett's dispersed collection, Elworthy's remained relatively intact, arriving at the SANHS' museum in the form of donations and a bequest between 1902 and 1913.[504] Four batches of objects followed his first donation, the majority of which can be described as charms against the evil eye, sourced from Naples, Sicily and Libya.[505] The bequest comprised mainly a 'large collection of charms (chiefly Neapolitan) and miscellaneous antiquities contained in four ebonized wall-cases… together with a manuscript catalogue of the whole collection, from which illustrations were taken for Mr Elworthy's works titled *The Evil Eye* and *Horns of Honour*'.[506] Evidently, Elworthy displayed and studied his collections in his own home (as did Haddon), in the manner of a gentleman's cabinet of curiosities, before transferring them to the museum.

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[502] On these debates see Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 161 and 187.
[503] Lang, *Custom.*
[504] This information is from the museum's accession registers. SAHNS' collections are now part of the Somerset County Museum. In 1874, SANHS acquired Taunton Castle to house its headquarters, library and museum collections — see SANHS, 'About Us', *www.sanhs.org/About%20Us.htm/* (Taunton: SANHS), accessed 21 May 2012.
[505] Elworthy's first donation was a 'Neapolitan harness charm, in the form of a horse', MoS 1902.69.
[506] This description is from the museum's accession register.

Like previous collectors of 'popular antiquities', Elworthy cited examples from the classics (Ovid, Pliny, the Bible and Shakespeare), from popular works of folklore (Brand, Hone, *Notes & Queries* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*) and from popular antiquarians including Sabine Baring-Gould.[507] He cited Tylor, Frazer and Müller, using them as sources of comparative ethnographic examples but applying their theories inconsistently.[508] Although he used (among others) both Tylor's concept of cultural survivals and Frazer's concept of divine sacrifice and rebirth, he leant towards Müller's view that Aryan religion had degenerated from monotheistic sun worship and that its original form could be recovered through philological analysis.[509] Elworthy's approach to finding out about the past was to compare symbols on material objects, for the purpose of 'reasoning… from the known to the unknown'.[510] He compared popular amulets from the modern Rome and Naples of his own travels with undocumented artefacts from ancient civilisations. He drew his material examples from museums in England (Oxford, Cambridge, the BM), France (the Louvre) and Italy (Naples and Rome), and from his own collections made on the streets of Italian cities and in Somerset. Reflecting his linguistic interests, he referred to his method of object analysis as 'pictorial etymology', analysing each of the symbols — especially horns (encompassing the crescent moon and horseshoes) and hands — found on composite amulets such as the modern Italian *cimaruta* (silver charms representing sprigs of rue) and *cavalli marini* (seahorses), as well as the ancient

[507] Brand, *Popular Antiquities*; W. Hone, *The Every-Day Book*, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1827).
[508] M. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion: four lectures delivered at the Royal Institution in February and May 1870* (London: Longmans, Green, 1899).
[509] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 61-65, 88, 289. For further discussions of these theories see Dorson, 'Great Team' and *British Folklorists*; R. A. Segal, *Myth: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[510] Elworthy, *Horns*, 3.

Roman *mano pantea* (hand of the goddess) and *dischi sacri* (sacred discs).[511] In contrast to Tylor, whose cultural evolutionism aimed to explain 'survivals' in European societies by comparing them with past and present practises perceived by him to be 'primitive'. Elworthy sought to 'connect the sirens of modern Naples with the ancient mythology of Egypt, Greece and Rome'. In drawing such parallels, he indiscriminately compared modern Somerset with times and places as diverse as the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East, Medieval Europe and Papua New Guinea.[512]

Like other writers of his time, including Tylor and Lang, Elworthy was at pains to emphasise his Christian credentials, especially the idea that religion has progressed from fear of supernatural forces (kept at bay through magic and spells) to love and gratitude towards a beneficent God (worshipped through religion and prayer), intimating that the latter is distinct and superior.[513] However, Elworthy was not explicitly concerned with making connections between Catholic and pre- or non-Christian practices, as other folklorists and anthropologists, including Tylor and Haddon, tended to do.[514] For the Classically educated Elworthy, the term 'pagan' referred to ancient Greece and Rome, rather than to the pre-Christian British past envisaged by Tylor and Lang. Elworthy's writing oscillates between theories of religious progress and degeneration, and

[511] By comparing Elworthy's sweeping generalisations about the symbolism of horns across time and space in *Evil Eye*, 196-105, with Jeremy Coote's careful, ethnographically specific study of the everyday 'bovine aesthetic' of the cattle-keeping Nilotes in Southern Sudan, we can contrast the approaches of a late-nineteenth century antiquarian and an anthropologist a century later. See J. Coote, 'The Technology of Enchantment', in J. Coote and A. Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology,* 252.
[512] Elworthy, *Horns*, 3, 59, 74.
[513] See Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 47-48, 86, 114, 277, 337; *Horns*, 206-207.
[514] Initally, I assumed that this was because of Elworthy's Anglican background in contrast, for example, to Tylor and Haddon's Quaker and Protestant backgrounds. Anglicans, however, could also be anti-Catholic.

swings between theories of cultural diffusion and those proposing independent invention of cultural traits. He states, for example, that belief in the evil eye is universal and therefore 'not to be taken in all cases as the measure of the civilisation of the people practicing it'.[515] Conversely, he suggests that the Somerset anti-witchcraft practice of sticking nails into onions was likely to have been diffused from Italy, together with the onions themselves.[516] Tylor, by contrast, interpreted this practice as a 'primitive' survival in contemporary England.[517]

At this time, a number of phenomena, which have since been empirically dismissed, were still subject to serious scientific investigation. The historian Jay Winter has commented that using 'the language of experimental science', some people 'pointed to magnetism, electricity, and radio waves as constituting unseen yet real phenomena of distant communication. Thought waves or other forms of human feeling or expression conceivably did the same'.[518] Like Tylor, Lang and Lovett, Elworthy was keen to point out parallels with contemporary fashions such as spiritualism, dowsing, the use of lucky charms in gambling, and participation in the 'Thirteen Club',[519] arguing that 'we cannot but see that fascination… is nothing more nor less than what we now call Mesmerism or Hypnotism'.[520] Similarly, David Livingstone argues that the boundary between experimentation and performance has been difficult to define, museums being

[515] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 44.
[516] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 58.
[517] See Wingfield, 'Heart at Home', 29-31.
[518] Winter, *Sites*, 56.
[519] Elworthy, *Evil Eye*, 93, 139. This club met specifically to defy the rules of superstition by breaking them.
[520] Elworthy *Evil Eye*, 38.

only one of the places where 'decisions are settled about what passes as scientific knowledge'. In the 1830s and 1840s, Livingstone explains, Michael Faraday's public experimentation with electricity was charged with being 'poised between conjuring tricks and scholarly authority, between the theatre and the academy'.[521]

Elworthy's collection forms part of a pattern of collecting at Taunton. The museum's accession register, written by the curator St George Gray, itself reveals stories of links between people and museums, and of changing attitudes to acquisition and disposal. Its first page includes objects which might later have been classified as geology, social history and archaeology, as well as folklore. St George Gray, best known for his archaeological excavations at Cranborne Chase and elsewhere, was trained by Pitt-Rivers and worked for Balfour at the PRM.[522] Other notable donors to the Taunton museum include Balfour, Toms, Edward and Lady Tylor, who donated a 'portion of the collection of the late Sir Edward B. Tylor, D.C.L., F.R.S' on her husband's death in 1917.[523] Tylor's collection was classified as 'ethnography' in the register and included material ranging from England to Asia and Australia, from weapons and sandals to ancient Greek pots. St George Gray's own first donation was itself a typical object of English magic — a mandrake root 'from Marston, near Oxford… believed to be possessed of valuable medicinal & magic properties by reason of the supposed resemblance to the human form…'.[524] Balfour, already a curator at the PRM at this time, donated

[521] Livingstone, *Science*, 25.
[522] See A. Petch, 'Harold St George Gray', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/332-harold-st-george-gray/* (Oxford: PRM, 2011), accessed 20 May 2012.
[523] MoS 1917.745. Lady Tylor also donated material directly to the PRM.
[524] MoS 1901.3.

two examples of medicinal seeds, one from Burma and one from India, the former '… an antidote to snake-bite, because of its resemblance to a snake's head and fangs…'. Such seeds were popular with folklore collectors and can be found in several institutions as examples of 'sympathetic magic'.[525] Evidently, St George Gray drew on his contacts for donations to his museum, and on contemporary anthropological theories.

Elworthy was succeeded by Hildburgh as the FLS' most prolific collector, and writer about, Mediterranean charms and amulets. Hildburgh has been called 'one of the leading members' of the FLS.[526] Chronologically, his writing on amulets took over when Elworthy's broke off. He published seven papers in *Folklore* specifically on amulets and other magical artefacts between 1906 and 1951, most of which were about 'apotropaic elements' against the evil eye in Italy and Spain,.[527] Like Elworthy, he seems to have been less concerned with 'superstition' or 'magic' specifically than with luck, 'fascination' and protection against the 'evil eye'. The titles of his papers include the words 'amulets', 'votive offerings' and 'folklife' as well as 'apotropaic elements', but not 'magic'. The

[525] Further examples can be found at the PRM, in Lovett's collections at the Science Museum, and in Clarke's collection at Scarborough.
[526] J. Simpson, 'Ellen Ettlinger, 1902-1994', *Folklore* (Vol. 106, 1995), 86.
[527] W. L. Hildburgh, 'Notes on Spanish Amulets', *Folklore* (Vol. 17, No. 4, Dec. 31, 1906), 454-471; 'Spanish Votive Offerings', *Folklore* (Vol. 17, No. 4, Dec. 31, 1906), 471-472; 'Notes on Some Amulets of the Three Magi Kings', *Folklore* (Vol. 19, No. 1, Mar. 30, 1908), 83-87; 'Notes on Some Contemporary Portuguese Amulets', *Folklore* (Vol. 19, No. 2, Jun. 30, 1908), 213-224; 'Further Notes on Spanish Amulets', *Folklore* (Vol. 24, No. 1, Mar. 1913), 63-74; 'Some Notes on Spanish Amulets', *Folklore* (Vol. 25, No. 2, Jun. 30, 1914), 206-212; 'Cairene Personal Amulets'; 'Indeterminability and Confusion as Apotropaic Elements in Italy and in Spain', *Folklore* (Vol. 55, No. 4, Dec., 1944) 133-149; 'Some Spanish Amulets connected with Lactation', *Folklore* (Vol. 62, No. 4, Dec. 1951), 430-448. He also published several papers on the representation of English folklore and folklife (including Catholic saints) in English Medieval alabaster carvings.

phenomenon glossed by anthropologists as 'magic' was core rather than peripheral to his studies but, like Elworthy, he rarely used the term himself.

Many of Hildburgh's papers appear to be *catalogues raisonné* of his own collections, accompanied by photographs of the objects laid out as scientific specimens. Just as artefacts accompanied FLS lectures, many papers in *Folklore*, including Elworthy and Hildburgh's contributions, were illustrated with photographs of the artefacts they discussed. Most of the published images relating to magic and amulets depict the artefacts themselves rather than more contextual scenes showing people, or the objects in use. This style of presentation emphasised the objects' status as scientific specimens rather than their social context. The anthropologist Nicholas Thomas has pointed out this phenomenon in relation to the 'artificial curiosities' collected on Captain James Cook's eighteenth-century voyages on which, for the first time, indigenous artefacts were depicted on blank backgrounds in the style of natural history specimens, accentuating their growing credentials as subjects of serious science.[528] Elworthy, Hildburgh, and Lovett all illustrated their *Folk-lore* text with objects laid out using this pictorial style, thus boosting their papers' appearance of scientific objectivity (*figures 6.1* and *6.2*).

After his death, Hildburgh inspired not only an obituary in *Folklore* but also three articles on the large collections he bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum (the alabasters) and to the Wellcome Collection (the amulets), including a paper by Ettlinger, whose work on amulets is said to have been 'warmly

[528] Thomas, 'Licensed Curiosity', 118.

encouraged' by Hildburgh.[529] During their 'social life', his collections have moved from supporting his own antiquarian interests, to illustrating the history of medicine at the WHMM, to facilitating cross-cultural comparison at the PRM. Unlike Elworthy's, however, they attracted little attention during the post-war folk revival, perhaps because they were exclusively from continental Europe rather than Britain. The scholarly fascination with ancient Mediterranean civilisation which had prevailed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been supplanted, in the late-nineteenth century, by an interest in people who anthropologists categorised as 'primitive' around the world. By the mid-twentieth century, material from Europe and the Middle East had fallen between the perceived extremes of the local and the global, represented in folk and ethnographic museums respectively, receiving little attention from museums or academia.

Ethnographic or folkloric material from continental Europe is generally conspicuous by its scarcity in English anthropological museums, which tend to focus on sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, the Americas and sometimes Asia. This was not the case, however, for charms and amulets, of which thousands of continental European examples exist in museums. They appear in almost every collection containing magic or folklore, sometimes in massive numbers. Their portability, abundance and intriguing symbolism made them an attractive proposition for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century collectors, whether

[529] H. A. L. B. and E. E., 'Dr W.L. Hildburgh, *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 67, 1956), 49; B. Blackwood and J. M. Morris, 'Dr W. L. Hildburgh's Bequest to the V&A Museum', *Folklore* (Vol. 68, No. 1, 1957), 315-319; Anon., 'Victoria and Albert Museum: Exhibition in Memory of Dr W.L. Hildburgh', *Folklore* (Vol. 69, 1958), 68; E. Ettlinger, 'The Hildburgh Collection of Austrian and Bavarian Amulets in the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum', *Folklore* (Vol. 76, No. 2, Summer, 1965), 104-117; Simpson, 'Ellen Ettlinger', 86.

as souvenirs or as specimens. In addition to their acquisition by the FLS, European amulets entered the PRM and MAA directly, while vast swathes — including Hildburgh's and Lovett's — first entered the WHMM before being transferred to the PRM *en masse* in 1985. The historian Jeremy Black has commented that for British tourists, Italy represented 'not simply the past of classical splendour and culture… but also the past in the present' with a 'reputation as a haunt of superstition and reaction' — in other words, 'survivals'.[530] This is the Italy we see reflected in the amulets collections of 'antiquarian folklorists' including both Elworthy and Hildburgh.

Using Dorson's classification of folklorists, one could classify both Elworthy and Hildburgh as 'antiquarian folklorists'.[531] Not only did they both focus on continental Europe rather than Britain and its colonies, they dwelt on minutiae of form and symbolism. They were more interested in the artefacts' connections with the ancient Mediterranean, with historical interactions between Muslims and Christians, and with geographical diffusion than with the place of magic in social evolution.[532] Elworthy's interpretations of the English material he collected reflect these preoccupations. Nevertheless, their assemblages were soon incorporated into comparative anthropological collections as material examples of Tylorian 'survivals'.

[530] J. Black, 'The Grand Tour: The British Experience in the Eighteenth Century', *Annali d'Italianistica* (Vol. 14, 1996), 532.
[531] Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 44.
[532] Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 160.

6.2. Lovett and ethnographic folklore

The next collector examined here, Edward Lovett, was one of the most prolific collectors of, and writers about, English charms and amulets. He has therefore attracted a great deal of popular and academic interest in the twenty-first century. A London-based collector living in Croydon and later in Caterham, Surrey, Lovett was a head cashier for a London bank, but folklore was his passion. He was therefore staunchly middle-class rather than a gentleman amateur like Elworthy, Pitt-Rivers or Tylor, or a salaried professional like Haddon or Balfour. Whereas Mediterranean amulets formed the nucleus of Elworthy's collections, England came first for Lovett, although he too brought together comparative material from the Mediterranean and further afield. Both collectors demonstrate subtle transformations in attitudes to collecting amulets, as expectations and aspirations shifted from antiquarianism to human science.

We know about Lovett through his widely distributed collections, their labels and associated archives, his publications and contemporary press reports.[533] His material is so pervasive in museums that it is helpful to look at it in detail and to imagine what shape the collections overall would have taken without his influence. Fewer than a hundred English folk amulets had already entered museums before the first accessions of Lovett's material 1909, by which time he

[533] Numerous local and national news clippings can be found in Clarke's scrapbooks at the SMT and in the archives of several other museums holding Lovett collections.

was already in his fifties. Joining the FLS in 1900, Lovett published many short articles in *Folklore* and elsewhere. His publications are brief and anecdotal; like Elworthy, he described himself as a data collector rather than a theoretician.[534] Amulets became an increasingly important focus of Lovett's work, perhaps as he perceived their growing respectability as subjects of study in academic circles. His notes and articles each described an aspect of his collections and collecting practice, shifting from wider antiquarian subjects in *The Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist* between 1896 and 1905, to charms and amulets exclusively in *Folklore* between 1902 and 1913.[535] Finally, in the 1920s, he self-published two short books, *Magic in Modern London* and one on the 'folk-lore and legends' of Surrey and Sussex.[536] He wrote about his own collecting practices in London but like Elworthy, made comparative links between his own findings and ancient or world cultures. He seems to have relished performing; a contemporary review of *Magic in Modern London* says that 'its stories are only a fraction' of those 'he tells in such an inimitable way'.[537] He was well known in the early decades of the twentieth century through his writing, exhibitions and lectures. In the 1910s-20s he lectured to a wide range of audiences, from museums and learned societies to soldiers in an Eastbourne convalescent camp. He also exhibited widely, from soldiers' amulets at the IWM to fire-making equipment at his local microscopy club; parallels can be drawn with Haddon's lectures on magic to soldiers during

[534] Lovett, *Magic*, 7.
[535] Lovett's papers relating to amulets and 'superstitions' were all published in *Folklore* and include 'The Modern Commercial Aspect of an Ancient Superstition', *Folklore* (Vol. 13, No. 4, 1902), 340-347; 'The Whitby Snake-Ammonite Myth', *Folklore* (Vol. 16, No. 3, 1905), 333-334, 'superstitions and Survivals amongst Shepherds', *Folklore* (Vol. 20, No. 1, 1909), 64-70; 'Amulets from Costers' barrows in London, Rome, and Naples', *Folklore* (Vol. 20, No. 1, 1909), 70-71; 'Difficulties of a Folklore Collector', *Folklore* (Vol. 20, No. 2, 1909), 227-228; 'Folk-Medicine in London', *Folklore* (Vol. 24, No. 1, 1913), 120-121.
[536] Lovett, *Magic*; *Folk-Lore and Legend of the Surrey Hills and of the Sussex Downs and Forests* (Caterham Valley: printed at the Caterham Printing Works, 1928).
[537] Anon., 'Magic in Modern London. By Edward Lovett', review in *Folklore* (Vol. 36, No. 1), 110.

the First World War.[538] Like Elworthy's and Hildburgh's, Lovett's writing relates closely to his collections; he justified his collecting through his writing.

Well over 1500 objects that Lovett collected — including over 900 English charms and amulets — entered at least 20 different museums in the UK and elsewhere before his death in 1933. Many of the objects date from around the First World War, although a substantial number claim to be from the late-nineteenth century or earlier.[539] Lovett's wider collections all relate to contemporary academic discourse on the 'survival' of apparently anachronistic beliefs and practices. Dolls and games feature strongly in his collections, for example, and both were important in anthropologists' and folklorists' theories: complex games were thought to provide evidence for cultural diffusion, while dolls were interpreted as 'survivals' of magical and religious figures such as the Congolese power-objects known to Europeans as 'fetishes'.[540] One curator has commented that Lovett 'must have been in contact with most museum curators in the country at one time or another'.[541] His English amulets and charms appear in many non-specialist and smaller museums around the UK, but did not

[538] According to Quiggin, '"Pagan Survivals in Modern Britain" was one of his most popular lectures with the B.E.F. [British Expeditionary Force] in France from 1903-1917'. Haddon also gave a lecture on *Magic and Primitive Religion* as part of a public lecture series.
[539] The Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery and the IWM are among those with soldiers' charms from Lovett. The NMW acquired Lovett's amulets both before and after the Great War, namely 16 mainly natural objects for health and protection in 1911-12, followed in 1918 by 26 mostly mass-produced charms used by soldiers. The Cuming Museum acquired its Lovett collection of Superstitions in 1916, while the Horniman's Lovett material was accessioned in 1912-13, with further charms used for luck and protection by soldiers in 1919 and 1933. Lovett corresponded with William Clarke of Scarborough between 1912 and 1927, giving or exchanging with him over 60 charms and amulets, some of which were military. Finally, the MWM holds at least 90 charms and amulets which are likely to have come from Lovett, many of which were used by soldiers.
[540] See Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 211; E. Lovett, 'Fetish Worship in Central Africa', *Folklore* (Vol. 14, No. 1, 1903), 61-63.
[541] Marion Wood (then Assistant Keeper at the Horniman Museum), in a letter to Andrew West at the Merseyside County Museum (now WML), 2nd Mar. 1981, Horniman Museum archive.

infiltrate the foremost anthropological institutions to the same extent. Despite the ubiquity of his charms in regional museums, none were obtained by the PRM during Balfour's curatorship, or by the MAA under Haddon's influence.[542] He remained an ambiguous figure in FLS terms, with his artefacts represented in many collections but not in the FLS' own, and with no obituary in its journal.

Lovett's collections are striking in that they were the first to concentrate on contemporary, urban, British material, incorporating commercially-made amulets and those originating overseas but used in England. In 1908, Lovett and Wright wrote in *Folk-lore* that 'there appears to have been a great revival in this country, during the last few years, of the belief in luck and protective amulets'.[543] They classified amulets into four types: made-up 'commercial amulets', imported lucky charms 'which were not amulets in their country of origin', 'imported foreign amulets or imitations of foreign amulets', and 'amulets of British origin' (see *figure 6.1*).[544] Lovett and Wright were adamant that folklore was living and changing, nevertheless the social evolutionary framework within which they viewed the objects is clear in their selection of artefacts as well as their writing.[545] From the time of the First World War, Lovett flooded museum collections with mass-produced charms, many of which were used by soldiers

[542] The PRM obtained 33 amulets directly from Lovett between 1896 and 1911 (roughly a third of the objects procured from him at that time), nine of which are currently on display. Balfour's correspondence with Lovett was relatively minimal.
[543] A. R. Wright and E. Lovett, 'Specimens of Modern Mascots and Ancient Amulets of the British Isles', *Folklore* (Vol. 19, No. 3, 1908), 288.
[544] Wright and Lovett, 'Specimens', 293-295.
[545] For comments on Wright's perspective see A. Petch, 'Arthur Robinson Wright', *England: The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Arthur-Robinson-Wright.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 9 Oct. 2015.

(*figure 2.2 d*), of which there are at least 170 at nine different museums. Some were commercially made while others were created by the soldiers themselves.

A high proportion of Lovett's soldiers' charms were used for generic luck or protection in warfare. Some, however, were attributed with the power to provide more specific benefits than earlier types of amulets, for example a frog brooch to aid 'fertility and abundance', a swastika amulet for 'content, love, health, prosperity, courage, hope & friends', and an elephant charm 'to impart strength and wisdom'.[546] Amulets specific to the Great War include those made out of pieces of German shell or shrapnel and metal charms made by convalescing soldiers. Soldiers' amulets were necessarily tiny things that could be worn, or carried in the pocket or clothing. For 40 of the charms specific regiments are named, but only a few give personal names such as 'Private White Northants Regiment'.[547] Some soldiers' amulets are explicitly Christian, such as crosses and St. Christopher medallions. Clearly many soldiers came from backgrounds where traditional remedies — religious as well as magical — were still in use.

Douglas suggests that although folklore collections were shaped by now obsolete theories, the objects themselves 'offer a wealth of material to elucidate the ordinary lives of… working people'.[548] This is clearly the case for Lovett's soldiers' charms. His collections reflected a wider cultural fascination with the supernatural at this time. Vanessa Chambers touches on soldiers' amulets in her

[546] SMT 1946.37, 1946.78 and 1946.8 respectively.
[547] A 'lucky stone' (Bristol N 256 (3)).
[548] Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals', 244.

paper 'A shell with my name on it'.[549] Owen Davies considers the full remit of supernatural beliefs which flourished during the Great War, including prophecies, religious visions and spiritualism as well as the use of amulets.[550] Davies explains that for Lovett 'there were no systematic surveys, questionnaires, or psychological theorizing. But Lovett's casual and human approach to folklore collecting produced some of the most valuable glimpses into the personal meaning of mascots and charms that we have'.[551] From Lovett's collections we can see that people of all classes relied on magical solutions to their problems well into the twentieth century, even though he and his contemporaries considered magic to be a survival from an earlier stage of human development. Following the historian Michael Roper, we can consider the 'mascots' and amulets used by these soldiers and their loved ones to be tools for 'emotional survival' rather than 'survivals' of obsolete beliefs.[552]

Antiquarian collectors such as Elworthy brought amulets back from the Mediterranean, but Lovett found Italian amulets on sale in London's 'Italian Quarter' and on East End costers' barrows. These take the form of horns, moons and hands among other shapes, and are typically made of silver, coral and mother-of pearl. In contrast to English charms which entered museums at an earlier date, they were used against the evil eye as well as for generic luck and protection. Lovett also amassed objects that took a particular form, notably

[549] V. Chambers, 'A Shell with my Name on it: The Reliance on the Supernatural During the First World War', *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* (Oxford: Mandrake, Vol. 2, 2004).
[550] O. Davies, *A Supernatural War: magic, divination and faith during the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[551] Davies, *Supernatural War*, 9.
[552] M. Roper, in *The Secret Battle: Emotional survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), looks at the role of letters and parcels to and from 'home' in the 'emotional survival' of soldiers and their families.

acorns, shoes and hearts, to which he attributed particular meanings that he traced back to ostensible mythical origins.[553] He tended to assume that all objects with the same shape had the same meaning. His object labels demonstrate that he supposed every acorn-shaped object was a charm against lightning, or at least a relic of such beliefs, but his own evidence belies this generalisation: he also collected acorn necklaces which were used against diarrhoea, for example.[554] Lovett used the concepts of 'survivals' and 'relics', swinging from personal observation to speculations about ancient civilisations and world cultures. Although he wrote a number of accounts of how he obtained objects directly from people who used them, it is often difficult to disentangle their words from his — it is doubtful, for example, whether women who wore mushroom-shaped hatpins perceived them to be 'phallic'.[555] Although acorns, shoes and hearts were long-standing amuletic motifs, Lovett tended to over-interpret them as survivals of more systematic beliefs.[556] He seems to have considered 'superstition' and 'magic' to be synonymous, commenting that 'one of the most interesting features in the study of superstition is the remarkable array of objects which are associated with magic by primitive folk nearly all over the world'.[557] Simply by using these two words interchangeably, Lovett revealed himself to be perched between antiquarianism (which favoured the concept of 'superstition') and anthropology (which favoured the concept of 'magic').

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[553] Examples of these can be found in several museums, notably the Cuming Museum.
[554] SMT 1946.444-445, Science Museum/Wellcome Collection (hereafter SM/W) A665283, Cuming Museum LDCUM1916.001.098-99, 1985.51.192 and 200.
[555] Lovett may have been inspired by Elworthy, who says that 'as to the fungus or toadstool, it is another phallic symbol, and has connection with the worship of Priapus' (*Evil Eye,* 340), or by Frazer's *Golden Bough* directly.
[556] This approach is pervasive in both his published and archival material.
[557] Lovett,'Whitby', 333.

Lovett's material, along with his ideas, reached widespread museums through his personal efforts to make connections. While he admired professional theoreticians such as Haddon, he was himself admired by regional enthusiasts. The collection made by William James Clarke is the largest collection of English charms and amulets amassed by one person other than Lovett's own. Now held by the SMT, the Clarke collection contains well over 500 charms and amulets from Yorkshire, other parts of Britain and elsewhere in the world, mostly obtained in the 1920s and 1930s.[558] Nearly 300 of these are English. Associated correspondence, as well as comparison with Lovett's material elsewhere, demonstrates that Clarke obtained many of the artefacts themselves from Lovett, together with his interpretations of them. In addition to contemporary found, homemade and commercially produced charms, some of the artefacts are facsimiles (a 'witch cake' which Clarke tells us was made from memory at his request, *figure 6.3*) or illustrative examples ('the first wasp of summer', presumably illustrative of Pliny's reference to the same).[559] Like both Lovett and Haddon, Clarke also relied on correspondents 'in the field' for objects and information, such as one Magnus Tulloch, from whom he obtained a pair of Shetland 'wristing threads' together with a transcription of ritual words said to make them effective in curing a sprained limb (*figure 6.4*).[560]

In their 1908 paper, Wright and Lovett refer to 'every folklorist who keeps a scrapbook',[561] which Clarke meticulously did. Clarke is the sort of character that

[558] Cadbury, 'Charms'.
[559] SMT Clarke's notebook (No. 1), 105-7; Pliny, *Natural History*, 341.
[560] SMT 1946.221 and associated correspondence.
[561] Wright and Lovett, *Specimens*, 90.

Dorson must have had in mind when he declared that 'with Brand and Hone to consult, no alert Englishman thenceforth would be unaware of the popular antiquities lodged in a thousand printed sources and visible in hundreds of country towns'.[562] The SMT's archive contains four handwritten scrapbooks or notebooks kept by Clarke from 1911 until he died in 1945. In typical antiquarian fashion these include quotations of folkloric interest from books and journals old and new, clippings from local and national newspapers, information taken directly from Lovett's letters, and — just occasionally — personal comments about 'superstitions' he has seen in practice amongst local people. Associated material in the SMT's archive includes dozens of notes and letters from Lovett, dating from 1912 until 1922, the decade following the one in which Lovett wrote most prolifically for *Folk-lore*. Although Clarke and other 'folk-folklorists' looked up to Lovett, the two men had much in common.[563] Both were middle-class, amateur folklorists who remained outside the academic inner circle, but their influence on public understanding of the past continues, through the objects and words they left behind.[564] Their collecting fell between the hey-day of academic interest in British folklore during the first folk revival and renewed popular attempts to salvage a vanishing way of life during the second.

Lovett's influence persists through both his objects and writing. Interest in the things that he collected has revived in recent years, with a number of

[562] Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 43.
[563] Douglas in *Material Culture*, 120, uses the term 'folk-folklorists' to refer to amateur historians.
[564] Alison Petch notes that Lovett was never a member of Dorson's 'Great Team': see A. Petch, 'Edward Lovett', *England: The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Edward-Lovett.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 3 Aug. 2017.

publications, projects and exhibitions based on his collections.[565] That Lovett identified 'superstitious' and 'magical' practices across social classes, and even seemed to half-believe or practice them himself, has made him attractive in twenty-first century England, with its aspirations towards egalitarianism and acceptance of diverse beliefs and practices. Lovett seems to have made a greater impression on collectors and enthusiasts than on theoreticians, however, both in his own time and today. He fervently promoted his enthusiasms to the general public, and his efforts are still playing out in his 'extended agency'. Stories Lovett told are often repeated in more recent interpretations, including James Sage's unpublished biography.[566] The popular biographer Peter Ackroyd takes Lovett's words at face value when citing the Cuming Museum as 'the true home of urban superstition'. Repeating tales from *Magic in Modern London,* Ackroyd declaims that 'ordinary' Londoners 'reverted' to 4000-year-old paganism in their quest for health; here we see an echo of Lovett's tendency to regard 'pagan' as a synonym for 'magic'.[567]

Ackroyd's writing is more poetic than academic, but the academic writers Sarah Williams and Jude Hill have also accepted Lovett's assumptions.[568] Williams situates the Cuming Museum's Lovett collection within the popular religion of

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[565] See, for example, Fiona Pitt's lecture on the Horniman's Lovett collections, *The Collections of Edward Lovett* (paper presented to the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, 1994, author's copy), and the Cuming Museum's 2010 public event, 'Evening of Superstition, Folklore and Stories'. In 2009, the FLS' *London Lore* conference included a session on Lovett, and the Wellcome Collection displayed Lovett material previously transferred to the PRM, in the exhibition *Charmed Life: the solace of objects*. Lovett's book has been reprinted in association with the MWM as *Magic in Modern London 1925 with Folklore and Legends of the Surrey Hills and of the Sussex Downs and Forests 1928* (Boscastle: Red Thread Books, 2014).
[566] J. Sage, *Lovett* (typescript, 1980, Cuming Museum archive).
[567] P. Ackroyd, *London: the Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), 210-212.
[568] S. C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Hill, 'Story', 65-87.

late-twentieth century Southwark. Despite acknowledging that 'custom and tradition are more profitably seen as… a dynamic process of social interaction', she uses phrases such as 'survivals of semi-pagan magic', 'pre-Christian religion' and 'ancient witchcraft custom'.[569] However, the users of material charms she describes seem to fall into Owen Davies' category of 'charmers' rather than self-professed, semi-professional 'cunning folk'.[570] Christian symbols and prayer, Williams demonstrates, are often used in conjunction with amulets and verbal charms. Many of her interviewees define themselves as Christian, but on their own terms — they are 'not the passive receivers of external agencies' but 'the makers of their own culture in religion'.[571]

Jude Hill's analysis of Lovett's amulets in the Wellcome Collection contributes to ongoing debates about the agency of objects, addressing the tendency of audiences to resist didactic interpretations. Hill argues that Lovett's amulets on display at the WHMM, open from 1913 until 1932, 'retained the potential to enchant, haunting the space of the museum and disrupting the narratives of evolution and progress' that Henry Wellcome wanted to impart. Larson, however, points out that few working-class Londoners (of the sort Lovett obtained most of his objects from) ever gained access to Wellcome's exclusive museum.[572] Lovett emphasised that professional people (of the sort that Wellcome invited into his museum) used amulets as well; they, too, could have been 'haunted' by the objects they saw.[573] Hill argues that the physical form of

[569] Williams, *Religious Belief*, 57.
[570] Williams, *Religious Belief*, 75-79; Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 83.
[571] Williams, *Religious Belief*, 167.
[572] Larson, *Infinity,* 154.
[573] Lovett, *Magic*, 22-23.

the objects themselves 'prompt[ed] onlookers to reflect on the resonance of such objects within their own lives', citing Lovett's example of a contorted mole's foot said to protect against cramp, interpreted by him as 'sympathetic magic'.[574] The artist Felicity Powell, in her 2011-12 exhibition *Charmed Life* at the Wellcome Collection, also took physical form as her cue, arranging hundreds of Lovett's amulets according to their visual resemblance. In 1903, Haddon remarked scathingly that Lovett had 'placed together a number of objects which have no connection with each other except that of casual form' — their crescent shape (see *figure 6.2*).[575] Whether consciously or not, both Hill and Powell replicate the way in which Lovett made comparisons between objects purely on the basis of their form. In contrast to Lovett, however, they are working in a postmodern context with its concomitant revival of interest in magical thinking. The objects are presented as ultimately unknowable, placed in front of the audience with no expectation of imparting a didactic message.

Clarke's collection was re-visited as part of the Cultural Olympiad project *Precious Cargo: Stories of the World*, culminating in the 2011 exhibition *Fears, Foes and Faeries* at the Scarborough Museum and Art Gallery. The justification for this project was that it 'welcomes the world to Britain by using our rich collections to tell inspirational stories about the UK's relationship with the world'.[576] Clarke's collection was chosen because of the international origins of many of the charms; in a sense it was re-appropriated to represent multicultural

[574] Hill, 'Story', 75-78.
[575] Haddon, 'Crescent Charms (Plate II)', *Folklore* (London: David Nutt, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1903), 182.
[576] This phrase was used in the Arts Council England's website at the time of the project.

Britain, although the exhibition itself addressed more traditional themes of amulets for safety at sea and charms against illness, witches and fairies.

People see the kind of magic that they want to see in Lovett's tiny charms. They and participants in the 'first folk revival' wanted to see pagan survivals. Ackroyd and Powell find a mysterious side of London; Hill finds evidence that objects 'haunt' us; Williams wants to discover 'wise-women'. Later, during the 'second folk revival', Cecil Williamson (founder of the Museum of Witchcraft) wanted witches (Chapter 8). The objects' original users hoped, or half-hoped, that real magic would cure their ills. Lovett and Clarke, in their search for superstition and magic, collected charms; their charms still collect people looking for magic.

6.3. Toms and archaeological folklore

Whereas Elworthy collected as an amateur and Lovett sold his collections to museums, Herbert Toms held a salaried position as a museum professional. Unlike Elworthy or Lovett, whose collections are dispersed across multiple institutions, Toms was able to retain his own collections at the Brighton Museum, which he curated for over forty years. The holed stone shown (*figure 6.5*) is one of a small collection of stones, fossils and other objects which were used as amulets in Sussex and Dorset, then collected by Toms between 1929 and 1935. He began his collection nearly 40 years after the FLS first proposed a national folklore museum and a year after the FLS' president, A.R. Wright, sounded the idea's death-knell by declaring it one of the FLS' 'unfinished

tasks'.[577] Folklore collecting by the PRM, MAA and FLS had all but ceased by this time and, outside of Oxbridge, concern with 'folklore' was being superseded by a wave of interest in 'folk arts' and 'folklife' which spread from continental Europe. Nevertheless, Toms' seemingly independent collection was more reliant on the academic 'core' than is at first apparent. He can be closely linked to networks of people who have studied material magic — both those who influenced him and those he influenced — through the objects themselves and the ways in which he interpreted them through his photographs, labels and catalogues, publications and lectures. His work has contributed to the disciplines of archaeology, palaeontology, geology and history as well as to folklore and anthropology.

The objects selected by Toms for their specifically folkloric associations now amount to less than thirty: at least twenty holed stones (some strung), a large belemnite, an ammonite, and a fossil sea-urchin (*figure 6.6*).[578] In the manner of Toms' mentor and former employer Pitt-Rivers, all of them are meticulously documented, while some are accompanied by detailed original display labels. Powers attributed to the objects range from the cure of specific illnesses (ague, piles), to protection against witchcraft or lightning, to simply bringing good luck. These attributes are typical of those credited to English amulets in other

[577] Wright, *Presidential Address*, 24.

[578] As well as the stones and fossils stored together today, Toms' albums list other objects typically found in collections of 'magic' or 'superstition', such as horseshoes and iron washers, an elder twig and a sheep's heart pierced with pins. It is possible that further items collected for their folkloric interest, such as holed stones or fossil sea-urchins, could be amongst Toms' collections at the Booth Museum of Natural History (BMNH). However, a database search indicates that only the objects recorded as part of Toms' folklore collection have documented folkloric associations. The global ethnographic collections contain a typical cross-section of artefacts including charms and amulets. Catalogue numbers ES/59/70 and ES/60/70, for example, are amulets from Sierra Leone that probably have extracts from the Koran inside. In Toms' local history collections we find a cross-section of objects of typical interest to folklorists looking for 'survivals', for example a lamp oil container from Sussex (AH100721), a tobacco jar (HA101165) and a token (HA4167).

museums, as well as to the verbal charms analysed by Roper.[579] Two carefully prepared albums of photographs and notes accompany the objects, making it clear that Toms considered them to form a discreet collection.[580]

The smaller of Toms' two albums, titled 'slip catalogue of lucky stones and charms presented by H.S. Toms', has a typed page each for thirty-seven objects of English magic originally in his collection.[581] The larger album, titled 'Lucky Stones of Three Generations', intersperses photographs taken during his fieldwork in Sussex with detailed captions for each. Toms goes into precise details of how the photographs were taken, for example 'photographed 20th May, 1929, 10 am, fll/1sec (side view)'. The first two photographs depict a lucky stone and horseshoe, about which Toms proudly proclaims that 'THIS WAS THE FIRST LUCKY STONE I HAD SEEN HUNG IN SUSSEX. It is now in my possession' (*figure 6.7 a-b*). The photographs include rows of fossil sea urchins *in situ* on windowsills, holed stones and horseshoes hanging by doors, and portraits of named householders whose homes these objects are said to have protected. It seems likely that Toms acquired his photographic skills and techniques whilst working for Pitt-Rivers, on whose excavations photography was also used.[582]

[579] Roper, *Verbal Charms*.
[580] Toms' objects and albums are now housed with geological and palaeontological collections at the BMNH, while the Brighton History Centre and the Sussex Archaeological Society's (SAS) archive in Lewes hold his associated archives. In addition to his albums, archival material at Brighton includes three albums of cuttings meticulously compiled by Toms (BTNRP S9TOMS1, 2 and 3 cover the years 1901-12, 1912-24 and 1924-36 respectively) as well as two files of miscellaneous cuttings, notes and correspondence (BH600917, S9TOMS.QTO). When I examined the objects in 2013, they were on loan to Bexhill Museum for an exhibition on Sussex folklore.
[581] BTNRP 4054 (Jul. 1936).
[582] The PRM's photographic collections contain images taken on Pitt-Rivers' Wiltshire excavations (PRM 2012.79.2-3). The identity of the photographer is not recorded.

Toms' collection is unique within regional museums and has therefore attracted academic attention in recent years. Assessments of his life and work have been provided by the archaeologist of ritual and magic Ralph Merrifield, the pre-historian Richard Bradley and the geologist Christopher Duffin.[583] More recently, the museologist Claire Wintle has assessed Toms' role as a curator as part of her study of the BMAG's ethnographic collections.[584] Museum professionals Richard le Saux, a curator at Brighton, and Alison Petch, a researcher at the PRM, have written brief biographies of Toms.[585] In the 1980s, both Bradley and G.A. Holleyman wrote about his place in the history of archaeology. Duffin's 2011 paper on Toms, subtitled *Witch Stones and Porosphaera Beads*, was the first to look at his study of local folklore, based on a detailed study of his collections and archives, a 'database [that] formed the basis of Toms' lectures and publications on the subject'.[586] Toms' collection of local folklore is worth revisiting, however, in order to gain a more balanced sense of its historical context and significance.

Uniquely within regional museums, Toms' collection remains intact at a single institution, perhaps in part because of its particular local relevance, but also because Toms was not involved in national organisations such as the FLS,

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[583] R. Merrifield 'Some Personal Memories of H.S. Toms', in G. A. Holleyman, *Two Dorset Archaeologists in Sussex: Lieut. General Pitt-Rivers in Sussex, 1867-1878 and Herbert Samuel Toms, Curator of the Brighton Museum, 1896-1939, by G. A. Holleyman, F.S.A., to which is Added Some Personal Memories of H. S. Toms by Ralph Merrifield, F.S.A. and a Chronological List of Published Papers, Reports, and Miscellanea by H. S. Toms* (Henfield, West Sussex: privately printed, 1987); R. Bradley, 'Herbert Toms — A pioneer of analytical field survey', in Bowden, Mackay and Topping, *Cornwall to Caithness;* C. Duffin, 'Herbert Toms', 84-101.

[584] Wintle, *Colonial Collecting.* The series in which this volume appears — *Museums and Collections* — is co-edited by Mary Bouquet, also co-editor of *Science, Magic, and Religion*.

[585] R. le Saux, 'Herbert Toms', *rpmcollections.wordpress.com/2010/12/07/herbert-toms/* (Brighton and Hove: Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2010) and A. Petch, 'Pitt-Rivers' Assistant and Curator at Brighton Museum', *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers*, *web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/ 695-herbert-toms* (Oxford: PRM, 2011), both accessed 8th Nov. 2013.

[586] Duffin, 'Herbert Toms', 85.

through which many collections of folklore were centralised or dispersed. Other than the Oxbridge curators discussed in previous chapters, few other collectors of English material magic had the opportunity to curate their own collections in an institutional context; Clarke had this privilege as an honorary (voluntary) curator of the Scarborough museum. Conversely, unlike Haddon and Balfour, Toms did not bring together others' collections as evidence for English magic, although he accepted individual contributions. This practice contrasts with the way in which he drew together ethnography collections from further afield, such as those from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands studied by Wintle.[587] Unlike his Oxbridge counterparts, he was not widely travelled.

Holleyman's study *Two Archaeologists in Sussex* was the first to compare Toms with Pitt-Rivers, for whom Toms worked as a young man. In Holleyman's opinion, 'the history of field archaeology' has 'overlooked the work of those who had been trained by Pitt-Rivers as his field assistants. Among these, two names stand out: Harold St George Gray and Herbert Toms'.[588] Both became curators responsible for significant collections of material magic in regional museums, in Taunton and Brighton respectively.[589] St George Gray worked under Balfour at the PRM for two years in the late 1890s before becoming the curator of the SANHS' collections at Taunton Castle from 1901 to 1949. Toms curated the Brighton Museum for a similar time-span, from 1896 until 1939. Bradley pointed to Toms as 'a pioneer of analytical field survey', characterising him as an

[587] Wintle, *Colonial Collecting*.
[588] Holleyman, *Dorset Archaeologists*, 29. The BMAG archive contains a cartoon and photograph of Toms and St George Gray working together in one of Pitt-Rivers' trenches, also reproduced in Holleyman, *Dorset Archaeologists,* fig. 11.
[589] See A. Petch, 'Harold St George Gray' and 'Pitt-Rivers' assistant', both accessed 24 Jul. 2016.

overlooked link in the chain between Pitt-Rivers and Merrifield. Bradley argued that whereas Pitt-Rivers tended to focus on 'points of detail, rather than whole landscapes', a myopic approach which held back his archaeology theoretically, Toms was a 'transitional figure', broadening archaeology out to encompass the contexts in which objects are found.[590]

Pitt-Rivers had set the scene for the comparative, 'scientific' collecting and display of material magic in its various guises by anthropologists and curators including Tylor, Balfour and Haddon (see Chapter 4). These museum-based collectors, in turn, gathered material from independent folklore collectors including Elworthy and Lovett, thus ensuring the longevity of their collections in public museums. Toms, however, occupied a more ambiguous position, hailing from a lower place in the class structure than these museum-based collectors. Yet, as a museum professional, he was also separate from the people he studied, with the potential to mediate between academic and public spheres. Toms had connections and influences both inside and outside of academia. In many respects he resembled those 'undistinguished mediators' who, Douglas suggests, linked 'folk informants' with 'the academy'.[591] He was both an outsider who held a professional position himself and an insider who participated in the practices that he studied. In his 1927 paper *Witchstones in Downland,* Toms tells us that 'during boyhood days in South Dorset, the writer himself had picked up and transported similar holed flints to hang outside the back door of his home'.[592] They were known as both 'Holy Stones' and 'Lucky Stones', displaying the

[590] Bradley, *Herbert Toms*, 43 and 46.
[591] Douglas*, Material Culture* , 244.
[592] H. Toms, 'Witchstones in Downland', *Downland* (Vol. 1, No. 10, Jul. 1927).

absence of distinction made by their users between religious and magical power. We have seen that Pitt-Rivers collected objects of 'superstition' from people who worked on his estate; perhaps this is how Toms caught Pitt-Rivers' attention, or alternatively, Pitt-Rivers' interest could have sparked Toms' own.

Toms came from a relatively modest background; his father was an under-gardener in Dorset, and by the age of 18 Toms had become a pupil-teacher at his local village school. In 1893 he was invited to join Pitt-Rivers' archaeological excavation staff, where he worked for the General as a 'supervisory field assistant'. Toms lodged at Pitt-Rivers' museum in Farnham, Dorset, where he also helped to organise the General's ethnographic collections. He married Christine Sophie Marie Huon (1877-1927), a Breton woman who was Mrs Pitt-Rivers' chambermaid, so his place in the class system relative to the Pitt-Rivers family is clear. In 1896, at the age of about 22, Toms took up a permanent post at the Brighton Museum, where he rose to the position of Curator and stayed until his retirement in 1939. The couple had shared interests; Mrs Toms' obituary says that she was 'closely associated with her husband in his archaeological field-work' and gave 'no fewer than a hundred lectures'.[593] As a woman, though, her husband's profession was not open to her at this time.

At Brighton, Herbert Toms was responsible for the natural history, art and ethnography collections as well as folklore and archaeology.[594] Curators at

[593] Anon., 'Death of Mrs H.S. Toms', *The Sussex County Herald*, (Sat. Aug. 20, 1927); Bradley in *Herbert Toms* also comments that the couple conducted archaeological fieldwork and research together.

[594] Toms is named as the source for just over two thousand items on the BMAG's collections database. These include objects, photographs, books and archival papers which relate to the full

Oxford and Cambridge had a narrower and more specialist remit, covering just anthropology, archaeology and folklore, so could apply greater specialism to those. Toms' biggest collecting areas were geological specimens (over a thousand items) and local archaeological material (hundreds), closely followed by world ethnography (over 150). His smaller collection of local folkloric material must be understood within this context. He modestly claimed that he was 'interested in, but not an authority on, local folklore'.[595] He thus fell into the pattern of collectors who referred to themselves as data gatherers rather than theoreticians. His interest in the subject seems to have stemmed from his involvement in archaeology and his desire to correct popular misconceptions about objects that local people found. Nevertheless, in folklore he shared a common interest of his day, which remained popular enough for local newspapers and magazines to publish many of his letters and report on his lectures on the subject.

At the beginning of Toms' career, gentleman amateurs like Pitt-Rivers were considered to occupy a higher social position than those who were paid to follow one of the newer professions, including curators. Holleyman argues that Toms was keen to be taken seriously by his higher-class peers; Bradley comments that 'he seems to have believed that he was a victim of academic snobbery', that he 'must have been aware of his lack of formal education', and that 'unlike many amateur archaeologists of the time, he was not a member of an established

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range of subject areas for which he had curatorial responsibility. This information was gleaned from BMAG's online database — see Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Hove, 'Collection Search', *brightonmuseums.org.uk/discover/collections/ collection-search/* (Brighton and Hove: Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2010), accessed 15 Dec. 2013.

[595] H. Toms, 'Spitting for Luck', letter to the Editor, *Brighton & Hove Herald* (7 Jan. 1928).

profession'.[596] Unlike his Oxbridge curatorial counterparts Balfour and Haddon, Toms did not serve as President of scholarly societies such as the FLS, AI or BAAS, nor was he involved with the UK Ethnographic Survey. He was, however, a founder member of the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Club (BHAC) for local enthusiasts, set up in 1906. Bradley argues that it was because Toms felt looked down upon by the university-educated, amateur researchers of the Brighton Archaeological Society that he founded BHAC, which encouraged people's interest in archaeology whatever their class. A notice for a meeting of the BHAC requested that members 'bring for exhibition specimens of archaeological interest which they have secured during the past year. A small descriptive label should be prepared for each exhibit'.[597] This is reminiscent of the FLS' exhibition at their Congress of 1891, as well as the activities of metal detecting clubs today. Perhaps the BHAC was closer to those of today's maligned metal-detectorists, who have been referred to as 'latter-day antiquarians'.[598]

The 'materialised facts' that Toms gathered himself were meticulously documented in the manner of Pitt-Rivers' archaeology. Several authors have commented on the systematic, rational nature of Toms' work. Pitt-Rivers, his erstwhile employer, is well known for having had an extremely practical and prosaic approach to the classification and arrangement of artefacts that stemmed from his early interest, as a military man, in the development or 'evolution' of weapons. According to Merrifield, 'Pitt-Rivers planned and executed his

[596] Bradley, *Herbert Toms,* 36-37.
[597] This notice is amongst Toms' archives.
[598] This comparison was made by a delegate at the joint UCL/FLS *Folklore and Archaeology* conference in London, 2012.

excavations like military campaigns and Toms' participation in these as his assistant in his formative years must have made its mark upon him'.[599] Wintle explains that Toms' time in office was similarly characterised by 'a particularly bureaucratic system of object accession and documentation' using a 'social evolutionary approach to object display' inspired by his training under Pitt-Rivers. [600] Toms treated his collection of contemporary Sussex amulets like an archaeological archive, keeping his objects, words and images together.

Toms continued to practice as a field archaeologist as well as a curator. Most of his own publications, issued between 1901 and 1938, were detailed studies of local archaeological sites. Although his archaeological writing rarely has folkloric overtones, we sometimes catch a glimpse of the wider anthropological context in which he worked, for example he compared what he called 'pigmy flints' (then the standard term for what are now known as Mesolithic microliths) with the work of what he referred to as 'the modern savage craftsman'.[601] He sometimes drew comparisons between ancient and modern material, making assumptions about the significance of the former: in a 1930 letter from Dorset to a Mr W. J. Jacobs, for example, he says that he 'endeavoured to photograph the Roman British Lancing Down lucky stones in the museum this morning'.[602] Despite his interest in folklore, he did not write theoretical treatises or publish in nationally prestigious journals such as those of the FLS, AI or BAAS, as did Tylor, Balfour,

[599] Merrifield, 'Memories', 31.
[600] Wintle, *Colonial Collecting*, 160.
[601] H. Toms, *Pigmy Flint Implements Found Near Brighton* (Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society Annual Report, 1907). In this paper, Toms states that 'the term "Pigmy" is applied, not to the people who made and used them, but to the implements themselves' (*Pigmy Flints*, 3) and, in cautious archaeological fashion, that 'no modern savage uses anything like them, so we are left to conjecture the purposes for which they were made' (*Pigmy Flints*, 4).
[602] Herbert Toms file, SAS archive.

and Haddon, or Elworthy and Lovett. Instead, Toms' archaeological reports were published in the magazines and proceedings of local societies including the *Sussex County Magazine* and the *Brighton and Hove Archaeologist*, as well as in the London-based antiquarian magazine *The Antiquary*. He also wrote letters to and articles for local newspapers, which he systematically cut out and pasted into scrapbooks, and it is amongst these that his writings on folkloric themes can be found. These took the form of notes and queries on subjects such as 'Spitting for Luck' and 'Brighton Superstitions'.[603]

Despite the archaeological bias of Toms' published work, themes of typically folkloric interest are strongly reflected in his archival material. In his less formal publications in magazines and local newspapers, sources popular amongst earlier theoreticians and collectors are cited, including hagiographies, *Notes and Queries* and works by Tylor and Frazer.[604] Typical themes of the 'first folk revival' addressed include Sussex folk songs, smugglers, the Gypsy Lore Society, 'The Folk Lore of Devon', seasonal 'need-fires' and the swastika.[605] Typically, Catholic practices are referred to as pagan survivals, while maypoles and the South Downs 'Long Man' chalk figure are interpreted as survivals of ancient fertility cults.[606] Toms' interests thus aligned with those of early folklorists,

[603] H. Toms ,'Spitting for Luck', *Brighton & Hove Herald* (7 Jan. 1928), 'Brighton Superstitions' (newspaper clipping, source unknown, 1928).
[604] Such sources include Frazer, *Golden Bough*; Tylor, 'Exhibition'; J.B. Bury, *The Life of St. Patrick and his place in history* (London, New York: Macmillan, 1905); R. Chambers, *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in Connection with the Calendar* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 1864); R. P. Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (London: privately printed, 1786).
[605] H. Toms, 'The Swastika' (letter to the editor), *English Mechanic and World of Science* (No. 2378, 21 Oct., 1910).
[606] H. Toms, 'The "Long Man" and the cult of fertility', *The Herald Magazine* (19 Jan. 1924); 'The Long Man and the Cult of Fertility', (letter to the editor), *The Brighton Herald* (1 May 1925).

interpreting what had been referred to as 'popular antiquities' by antiquarians but using the anthropological theory of 'survivals'.

From 1932-3 onwards, Toms' archives contain correspondence with Lovett as well as curators at other museums; clearly, few curators with a potential interest in folklore escaped Lovett's attentions.[607] Of about 45 papers, 'reports and miscellanea' published by Toms, the few on folkloric themes include 'Thunderbolts', 'Shepherds' Crown's, 'Folklore Notes', '"Rabbits!"' and 'Witchstones in Downland', topics are familiar from Lovett's work.[608] One article by Toms engages with Lovett's discussion of a taboo against mentioning rabbits amongst Brighton fishermen, in which Toms refers to Lovett respectfully as 'a well-known and distinguished writer and lecturer on folk-lore'.[609] Elsewhere, Toms recounts that '…some years ago I learnt from the late Edward Lovett, the well-known folklorist, that in about the years 1865 to 1870, he had seen fossil *echuni* on the outside window ledges of Wilts and Gloster [*sic*] cottages of peasants, who had so placed the fossils to guard the house against thunderbolts'.[610] Evidently Toms accepted Lovett as a peer and inspiration, as did another provincial curator — William Clarke of Scarborough. Despite his more peripheral position, then, Toms was firmly linked into national networks of

[607] The letters are from staff at the NMW, the London Museum (later Museum of London) and the V&A. The archaeologists Sir Flinders Petrie, Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Miles Crawford Burkitt are all mentioned. Toms' archive contains a number of Lovett-related items, including copies of some of his folklore-related articles and two letters from him, one referring to hare-lore and spider-lore, the other to iron and horseshoes.
[608] H. Toms, 'Folklore Notes' (source unknown, 1926); 'Thunderbolts'; 'Shepherd's Crowns', *Downland Post* (1 Sept. 1926); '"Rabbits!"' (source unknown, 1926); 'Witchstones'; 'Brighton Superstitions', (newspaper clipping, source unknown, 1928). Holleyman, *Dorset Archaeologists*, provides a bibliography of Toms' published work.
[609] H. Toms, 'Rabbits: a Folk-lore Note', *Sussex County Magazine* (Nov. 1935), 598-699.
[610] H. Toms, 'Thunderbolts' (source unknown, 1926), 4.

people within the early anthropology and folklore movements, sharing their assumptions about social evolution and cultural survivals.

Like those who collected 'superstitions' before him, Toms' primary aim in his writing on folklore seems to have been to dispel any lingering 'superstition' by pointing out its ancient origin, but also to salvage it. He wistfully commented that 'the time is at hand when it will all be incredibly valuable, and then men will wish sorrowfully enough that there had been more collectors'.[611] Like many folklorists and anthropologists since the late-nineteenth century, he assumed that he was living though a time of unprecedented change, in which traditions that had persisted since the beginnings of humanity were becoming obsolete.[612] Desire for 'progress' towards modernity was mingled with regret and a sense of loss of rural life in the face of industrialisation (see Chapter 3). By the 1930s, when Toms produced most of his work on English folklore, museums of comparative anthropology were being superseded by those focusing on 'folklife'. His collection of local amulets would not seem out of place in a local folklife museum. Instead, he interpreted them as his predecessors, including Lovett, had done — as survivals of ancient practices — while material evidence for living magical traditions remained absent from folklife museums (see Chapter 7).

Toms, however, took a more systematic approach to collecting amulets than most of his predecessors, photographing and recording the names of the people he collected from, and noting the powers that they themselves attributed to the

[611] Toms, 'Witchstones'.
[612] Toms, 'Thunderbolts', 5.

objects. Presumably, he was inspired by the way in which Pitt-Rivers' documented his collection, for example the holed stone from Dorset mentioned in Chapter 4. The specific context in which each object was acquired was clearly paramount to Toms. Most have large catalogue numbers written on them in red ink, the holed stone introduced earlier (*figure 6.5*) is almost entirely covered in explanatory writing, and a fossil urchin fits perfectly into a precisely labelled box. Evidently he regarded them as scientific specimens rather than aesthetic or curious objects. It is presumably because they take the physical form of natural objects rather than artefacts that they are now housed at the Booth Museum of Natural History (BMNH) rather than the BMAG. Without an associated story, they would simply be fossils and stones. Toms made every effort to ensure that the stone and its story remained together.

Toms' albums provide us with glimpses of his relationship with the people from whom he collected, as well as their differing levels of belief in the objects' powers. An album page headed 'lucky stones, for curing ague', for example, states that Toms '*borrowed* the stones from Mrs Fred Moore, and photographed the same on 22nd Oct., *returning* the stones to Mrs Fred Moore on the 26th Oct' 1929 [my emphasis]. Toms noted that 'Mrs Moore believes in the efficacy of the stones, and would not part with them'. In some cases, therefore, he satisfied himself with 'collecting' the stones in the form of detailed notes and photographs rather than acquiring the objects themselves. Toms' captioned photographs therefore enable us to glimpse the life trajectories of objects that never entered museums, as well as possibly allowing their owners greater agency in deciding which objects to retain or to relinquish. In another example, a donkey's shoe was given to Toms

by a Miss Gray, who said that she was not a believer herself but that 'it hung for many years on the key of the medicine-cupboard in her mother's room'.[613] A group of 'shepherds' crowns' were 'regarded as curios but Mr Pratt [on whose windowsill they were photographed] had heard that they were considered lucky'; it sounds rather as though Toms pressed him for this interpretation. Elsewhere, cynicism is recorded — one photograph depicts 'the horseshoe hung to sill by Mrs Wort's son Albert, not long before he was burnt to death in a motor accident'. A looser assessment of 'belief' in the powers of the objects was perhaps provided by an anonymous writer in the *Brighton and Hove Herald* who referred to 'this belief, or instinct' in the power of 'lucky stones'.[614] In a further example, a facsimile was collected rather than an 'authentic' artefact: a necklace was deliberately made of *Porosphaera* beads 'gathered in 1935 from among the shingle… to show the type of necklace (made from such bead-like fossils) formerly worn for luck in Brighton'.[615] As noted, the creation of replicas as 'materialised facts' was common practice amongst 'scientific' collectors.

Toms' meticulous documentation of the objects in his collection, their previous setting and owners, and of the meanings attributed to them, contrast with the more speculative meanings assigned to such objects by both earlier and later writers. In his 'Shepherd's Crowns' article, for example, Toms makes extensive use of Christian Blinkenberg's 1911 cross-cultural study, which argues that a popular belief in the power of 'thunderstones' (objects now classified variously as fossils, prehistoric stone tools and curiously shaped stones) is virtually

[613] BTNRP 4054/32.
[614] Anon., 'Witchstones: Relics of an Old Superstition', *Brighton and Hove Herald* (Aug. 13, 1927).
[615] BTNRP 4054/8.

universal.[616] Blinkenberg speculatively attributes such beliefs to 'ancient religious ideas', namely 'a primeval worship of the actual thunderstone as a god', concluding that 'the ancient thunderstone belief, which satisfied the popular craving for an explanation of natural phenomena, has survived among the nations of the world until the present day'.[617] Toms, by contrast, although he puts forward an argument for the 'modern folklore of the shepherd's crown as a thunderstone', avoids speculation about ancient religious beliefs, noting only that such a stone 'protects the house in which it is kept'.[618] His gleanings from his own 'local folklore' fieldwork with 'a notebook and camera', though, simply record that the objects in question were 'lucky stones' and that if their proper care was neglected 'something dreadful would happen'.[619]

The contribution made by Toms' wife Catherine to his folkloric work is ambiguous. A file attributed to Mrs Toms in the SAS archive contains material of primarily folkloric rather than archaeological interest, including local newspaper cuttings duplicated in Mr Toms' archive in Brighton.[620] Typed notes for a 1926 lecture on 'ceremonial fires', in which these are characterised as 'Pagan Survivals', have been re-attributed from Herbert to Catherine. In these notes, which conclude that their 'reason for survival' is the 'great difficulty of

[616] Toms, 'Shepherd's Crowns'; Blinkenberg, C., *The Thunderweapon in Religion and Folklore: a study in comparative archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911). Ridgeway and Haddon sat on the editorial committee which published the series including Blinkenberg's book. 'Shepherd's Crown' is a vernacular name for a fossilized sea-urchin. To support his theory that fossil sea-urchin lore was diffused across space and time, Toms compared its English use with that in Brittany and cited Sir Mortimer Wheeler on its Gallo-Roman use, but declined to speculate about its meaning.
[617] Blinkenberg, *Thunderweapon*, 13, 58, 66.
[618] Toms, 'Shepherd's Crowns', 4.
[619] Toms, 'Shepherd's Crowns', 7.
[620] This calls into question whether other archival material has been correctly attributed. Catherine Toms gave a talk on this subject to the Men's Co-operative Guild Brighton branch in 1926.

eradicating custom', English practices are compared with those in Brittany, North America, China and elsewhere. Christmas festivities are compared to ancient Roman Saturnalia, while 'orgies' and 'human sacrifices' are mentioned with a horror approaching fascination. Holleyman informs us that Mrs Toms was a Roman Catholic, but in the archival material her dislike of Catholic practices with what she perceives as 'pagan' overtones seems virulent.[621] In her lecture notes she demonstrates her Christian point of view by saying that 'inherited heathen observances from pagan times' are 'curiously mixed with those springing from Christian feelings'. The fact that she kept a newspaper review of Frazer's *Psyche's Task* perhaps reflects her ambivalent perspective, as a conservative Catholic, on 'superstitions'.[622] In *Psyche's Task*, Frazer argued that valued social institutions such as civil government, private property and marriage were partially based on superstition. Perhaps influenced by Frazer, Catherine Toms regarded 'superstition' as having value in terms of maintaining social order and control. Both Mr and Mrs Toms, then, attempted to contextualise their studies within anthropological theory.

Perhaps Toms' interest in folklore was inspired by, or pursued in memory of his wife. Duffin points out that his interest in folklore increased after she died, observing that 'around this time, he became a serious collector of local folklore and amassed a significant archive of interview records, photographs and

[621] Holleyman, *Dorset Archaeologists*.
[622] J. G. Frazer, *Psyche's Task, a discourse concerning the influence of superstition on the growth of institutions* (London: Macmillan, 1909); H. H. F., '"*Psyche's Task". The value of superstition*' (newspaper clipping, source unknown, SAS archive).

specimens'.[623] Notably, Toms obtained his first object of contemporary folklore — a holed stone — in 1929, just two years after her death, although he had been publishing short articles on folkloric subjects since 1926. Toms' third scrapbook, which includes newspaper cuttings about Catherine's death and his own retirement, also incorporates a greater proportion of folkloric material — items from *The Downland Post* referring to his own work on 'thunderbolts', 'shepherds' crowns', and 'witchstones in Downland', for example. It is possible that Mrs Toms may have influenced her husband's interest in folklore, that the couple may have made the collection and cuttings-books together, or that Catherine's interests reveal a side of Herbert that he played down in his professional life.

6.4. Two sides of Toms?

Bradley argues that 'Toms' character was full of contradictions… He was committed to the Victorian rationalism that had inspired Pitt-Rivers, yet he was also interested in the spiritualist movement'.[624] We have seen, however, that alongside the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century academic impetus towards scientific rationality, there ran a fascination with the supernatural and irrational which operated on academic, public and personal levels. At the beginning of Toms' career, nascent human sciences were museum-based. Museums were considered to be places where a rational order was imposed on objects, where they were taken out of their original setting and subsumed into an objective, scientific scheme. Any supernatural powers previously attributed to

[623] C. J. Duffin, *Herbert Toms and Geological Folklore* (London: abstract of a paper presented to the History of Geology Group, 8 Apr. 2009).); see also Duffin, 'Herbert Toms', 84.
[624] Bradley, 'Herbert Toms', 37.

them were ostensibly neutered in a museum context. An interest in spiritualism, however, was far from unusual amongst intellectuals at that time. As we have seen, Pitt-Rivers and Tylor attended spiritualist meetings. Their ostensible motivation was to investigate the scientific veracity of spiritualism as well as the boundaries of rationality in a supposedly rational society. There is a possibility, however, that Toms' motivation was different. Merrifield recalls that Toms was attracted to spiritualism after his wife's early death and subscribed to 'Psychic News', but never attended a séance, of which his Catholic wife would have strongly disapproved.[625]

More recent theorists, including Wintle and Hill, have argued that the museum setting does not render objects immune to re-interpretation, or to less rational responses by visitors.[626] Wintle has taken this strand of thought forward in relation to Toms' ethnographic collection, examining the disjunction between the curator's intention and the visiting public's reception of ethnography at the Brighton Museum between its major redisplays in 1902 and 1949. She argues that visitors viewed the exhibits as entertaining curiosity shows, whereas Toms' intention (much like Haddon's and Balfour's) was to educate them in sober scientific principles and demonstrate 'evolutionary sequences'. Toms thus joined the line of anthropology curators from Pitt-Rivers to Haddon and Balfour and beyond who attempted to raise 'historical, exotic and human material' to the

[625] Merrifield, 'Memories', 35.
[626] Wintle, *Colonial Collecting*; Hill, 'Story'.

level of respectability that had previously been attained only by 'the material culture of art and natural history' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[627]

Nevertheless, alluding to newer academic nuances of the word 'magic', Wintle refers to Toms' museum as 'a magical storehouse for animate objects' and as 'a comedy store and supernatural space'.[628] Visitors, she argues, seem not to have 'engaged with official interpretations offered, but rather to have superimposed their own, pre-formed experiences of other cultures'.[629] In doing so, they reverted to the roots that museums have in the lower-class curiosity show rather than the upper-class curiosity cabinet.[630] In relation to ethnography 'it was the 'cannibal man-catcher, tomahawk and poison darts that attracted attention' from the local newspaper.[631] To this list, we can add witchcraft. Jude Hill has made a similar point in relation to Lovett's London charms at the WHMM.[632]

Toms' committment to the educational as opposed to the entertainment value of museums has also been called into question. Did Toms' audiences also seek the 'exotic and sensational' in their own past and amongst their own neighbours? Did Toms act up to visitor expectations in his performances, or indeed harbour such inclinations himself? Did he view the objects he curated from a purely rational point of view, or did he believe that they had some residual supernatural power? In Merrifield's view, 'as a museum curator Toms was less concerned with

[627] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 239.
[628] Wintle, *Colonial Collecting*, 192.
[629] Wintle, *Colonial Collecting*, 193.
[630] Kell, 'Ashmolean', 38, identifies these twin roots.
[631] Wintle analyses public reactions by looking at references to the museum in the local newspaper, *The Herald*, between 1900-1940 (*Colonial Collecting*, 191).
[632] Hill, 'Story', 65.

popular presentation in the exhibition galleries or with the educational potential of the collections than with the proper care and recording of them'.[633] If that is the case, however, he seems to have balanced this with the large number of entertaining public lectures he gave and the populist reports he wrote for local newspapers and magazines. In *The West Sussex Gazette* article 'In Darkest Sussex', Toms is presented as 'a curious, mystical figure' in a red fez, 'surrounded by curios from Egypt… and [other] equally thrilling relics… [as he] chatted about witchcraft'.[634] The title ascribed by the newspaper to this article infers a comparison of Sussex 'folk' with 'exotic savages', and Toms hardly fought against this view by sporting an exotic fez. According to an article in *The Worthing Herald*, 'Mr Toms said that it might be ridiculed, but witches had certainly got powers and there were some witches living still. Though ninety per cent of their power was accounted for by the power of suggestion, witches had psychic gifts that were real'.[635] This might appear to be an instance of Toms embracing 'the exotic and sensational' in his representation of his own local area, but as noted, the possibility of the reality of psychic powers was not ruled out by the wider scientific community until after the First World War, at least.

Despite Merrifield's comment that Toms focussed on documentation rather than public education, Toms' archives give the impression of an ardent public educator, keenly spreading the word about his interests and discoveries through popular lectures and publications. In these instances his intended audiences

[633] Holleyman, *Dorset Archaeologists*, 36.
[634] Anon., 'In Darkest Sussex', *West Sussex Gazette* (14 Nov. 1929), 11.
[635] Anon., 'Shepherds' Crowns and Witch Stones / Mr Toms' talk to Worthing Archaeologists / Quaint Folk-Lore', *The Worthing Herald* (13 Dec. 1930).

were public rather than academic, and he took pains to entertain as well as educate them. Unlike Lovett, who toured the country with his talks, Toms' outreach remained local to his museum. The fact that Toms founded a second, more populist archaeology club in Brighton exemplifies the processes through which obsolescent academic ideas began to enter popular consciousness through middle-ranking figures of authority like Lovett and Toms. In the ongoing struggle between museums as places of education (rational, virtuous) versus entertainment (irrational, degenerate), Toms had a foot in both camps.

Existing evaluations of Toms and his work thus vary between those which consider him to be primarily rational (Merrifield), through rational but popularly misunderstood (Wintle), to harbouring concealed irrational tendencies (Holleyman). My own conclusion is that his public performances and interest in spiritual forces did not make him a 'contradictory figure' and were not incompatible with his aptitude for meticulous documentation. Toms, then, was not necessarily a contradictory character. His range of interests and attitudes was typical enough for the time in which he lived, and he could have considered entertainment the best way to spread enlightenment. His rational side may have been overemphasised, however. He revealed a less strictly scientific facet of himself in his public performances and personal archives, in particular those pertaining to local folklore.[636]

[636] Conversely, at a Missionary Heritage seminar in Cambridge in June 2012, one delegate commented that missionaries often acknowledged only their religious role in public, while their scientific interests were kept private, or manifested in their collections and ethnographies.

Toms began his career in the late-nineteenth century, when museums with scientific aspirations were in their formative stage, and died during the Second World War, when this Victorian and Edwardian legacy was fading away. His background in archaeology and museums meant that his talks and writing were materially based. As a second-generation collector in the tradition of Pitt-Rivers, he thought that the material remains of everyday life were worth keeping, and worth documenting meticulously. As a protégé of Pitt-Rivers, he became one of the first collectors to document living local folklore with a level of care also applied to archaeological sites, employing the relatively new technology of photography uniquely to the study of English amulets. His absence of theoretical ambition is reflected in the fact that he wrote about 'superstition' and 'folk lore' rather than 'magic', which was a more popular term amongst those with theoretical aspirations.

The study of Toms throws light on changing relationships between professionals, amateurs and the public. Toms' ambiguous class background means that he held these contradictions within himself. We have seen that as a salaried professional, he felt distanced from gentleman-researchers of independent means and perhaps closer to the people he was studying. His work can be viewed from two different angles in this respect. His detailed documentation could be interpreted as a concerted effort to maintain or generate distance between himself and his subjects, or to understand them on their own terms. His reduction of peoples' lives and beliefs to a list of 'facts' to be catalogued and analysed could be seen as a means of siding with an élite scientific viewpoint. From this angle, the 'folk' were viewed through the impassionate eyes of an outside observer and

photographed as ‘specimens’. However, his photographs are different from those published by earlier collectors, including Elworthy and Lovett, who simply lined up artefacts on plain backgrounds, inviting viewers to focus on their form rather than their context. Toms, by contrast, noted the beliefs and biographies of his subjects, and this careful attention to their individuality, together with the relatively informal photographic portraits that he took of them, could be understood as displaying an uncommon empathy with them.

For the first time, English magic was materialised systematically in photographs of the people who used it as well as in the objects themselves. Earlier collectors had assumed that meaning and significance were inherent in the objects alone and that their individual users were of peripheral interest, other than as ‘typical’ examples of their class. Toms has been lauded for adding context to Pitt-Rivers’ archaeological methodology; he did the same for the study of contemporary magical practices. In giving popular talks and writing for local publications, as well as in setting up a new and more populist archaeological society, Toms communicated with the ‘folk’ at their own level rather than talking about them through the media of national journals and societies. In doing so, he may simply have been remaining within the comfort zone that his upbringing afforded him, but his approach is also typical of democratising trends in museums and academia throughout the twentieth-century, during which the gap between those who are studied and those who study them was incrementally reduced. On the other hand, professionalisation meant that amateur voices became excluded.

Toms' meticulous recording of amulets' use may be as close as we can get to an insider's perspective. My survey indicates that the simple revelation or concealment of most of the English amulets concerned is considered enough to render them effective, and that few have been recorded as requiring additional ritual activity to activate them. We do not know whether Toms' coverage of the use of fossils, stones and other objects as charms and amulets in Sussex was comprehensive. His informants seem to have willingly imparted information about (and sometimes parted with) the objects he saw and collected, whilst deciding to keep others. We cannot know whether they also concealed things in their walls, their pockets or their minds.

6.5. Conclusion to Chapter 6

This chapter has moved through time by comparing individual collectors of three generations through whom English amulets flooded into museum collections between the turn of the twentieth century and the Second World War. Elworthy was born in 1830 so belonged to the same generation as Pitt-Rivers and Tylor; all three were gentlemen amateurs whose collections entered public museums later in their lives. Tylor was the only one of these three to live through the First World War. Lovett was born two decades later, in 1852. Frazer and Ridgeway as well as Haddon and Balfour were his contemporaries. Like the latter two men he combined collecting 'in the field' with theorising, although unlike them he was not Oxbridge educated and never held a professional position in a museum, while his writing did not gain the academic respect that theirs did. Toms was born two decades again after Lovett, in 1874, so belonged to the same generation

as Clarke, born in 1871. Like Balfour, Toms spend his life as a museum professional. All of the individuals in these second and third generations died during the years of the Second World War.

There was also an economic dimension to their collecting practices. As a wealthy man, Elworthy was able to travel and pursue his passion without worrying about its cost; as a middle-class man, Lovett tried to make money from his collections, or at least to recoup his expenses; Toms, despite his working-class background, was able to take advantage of new professional opportunities for paid employment. Despite their differences, however, all three men were part of the same national network: Elworthy knew Tylor, both Elworthy and Toms acquired artefacts from Lovett, and Toms trained under Pitt-Rivers. For all of the collectors considered, their interest in amulets came to the fore later in their lives. Elworthy's books were published when he was in his sixties and his collections entered the Taunton museum as a bequest. Lovett collected amulets and campaigned for their purchase by museums when he was in his fifties and sixties, and wrote about them between his fifties and seventies. He was in his sixties when he corresponded and exchanged material with Clarke, who was then in his forties, and whose collection later entered the Scarborough museum as a bequest. Toms, too, was in his fifties and sixties when he made his discreet collection of local amulets, which he was then able to display immediately in the museum where he worked. For all of these collectors, then, their interest in superstition, folklore or magic supplemented their main profession and prior personal interests.

Each of the individuals under consideration belonged to scholarly societies and had different relationships with academic disciplines as well as with museums. Elworthy belonged to local Somerset antiquarian societies as well as to national organisations, while his collecting interests were international. The FLS and its attempts to set up a museum were important for Lovett, and his collections were national but centred on London, where he worked. Toms steered clear of these national organisations, preferring to work with local societies and write for local publications. His collection of amulets was exclusively local. Elworthy's studies were embedded in his Classical education and, like Ridgeway's, reflect an older generation's study of magic with the intention to reveal what they considered to be 'degeneration' from Classical civilisations and the diffusion of cultures across space and through time. His English amulets, from the 'hernia tree' to horse brasses, were all intended to demonstrate his theories that magic is rooted in fear of the 'evil eye'. Despite his acknowledgement of newer evolutionary approaches he remained, fundamentally, an antiquarian. Lovett combined Elworthy, Frazer and Ridgeway's hunt for Classical comparisons with Tylor, Haddon and Balfour's anthropological hunt for what they considered to be the 'survival' of 'primitive' traits in modern society. His contemporary collecting looked for evidence of the survival of 'folklore' in the most tenuous of artefacts. His English amulets included mass-produced charms contextualised amongst materialised 'survivals' of all kinds. Toms' meticulous approach combined the archaeological methods of his mentor Pitt-Rivers and early anthropological attitudes to 'superstition' with newer, emerging methodological approaches to the study of 'folk-life', an approach which later fed into social history.

These three case studies demonstrate that scholarly attitudes to magic did not proceed in a unified, unilinear fashion from generation to generation. Whilst material magic had fallen into academic neglect in the mid-twentieth century, museums continued to acquire collections that had been inspired by earlier academic approaches. A growing defensiveness or anxiousness may be sensed amongst these collectors about their role in relation to professional theoreticians. We can often perceive a tension between their own personal interests and how they felt they ought to justify their collecting. Their presentation of themselves as 'mere collectors of facts' was belied by their efforts to generate theoretical interpretations. Theoreticians and collectors from Tylor and Frazer to Elworthy, Lovett and Toms amassed objects that backed up their own views of the world. Such interpretations tell us little about what the amulets meant to their original makers and users, whose words were more scantly recorded. Even today, a tension remains in museum interpretation between respect for professional expertise and the empowerment of diverse voices, with recent books and exhibitions on magic attempting to balance these.

Although the words and things that they left behind extended these collectors' agency after their deaths, the presence of their objects in museums also opened up possibilities for new interpretations. Audiences did not always perceive their objects in ways that the collectors and curators had intended. Imaginative curiosity resurfaced alongside sober science. The following two chapters will consider how these pre-war collections were re-distributed, re-contextualised and re-interpreted and by new generations in the second half of the twentieth century. Collecting material magic in itself continued to reflect changing

relationships with the past, and more specifically, to contribute to changing understandings of 'magic'.

CHAPTER 7. Re-grouping and taking stock: the mid-twentieth century

Moving forward in time, this chapter considers a variety of ways in which collections amassed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were re-assessed, re-allocated, re-discovered and re-interpreted from the 1930s onwards, especially after the Second World War. The anthropologist and curator Andrew Moutu has envisaged collecting as the aftermath of a tidal wave; only when the wave subsides, leaving loss and devastation in its wake, can people take stock, gather themselves and begin to incorporate what remains into a coherent narrative.[637] For a century or more, museums have found themselves in such a situation as they take stock of the flotsam and jetsam left behind when the flood of collecting subsided. Gosden and Larson's *Knowing Things* and Larson's *Infinity of Things* examine the histories of the PRM and the Wellcome Collection respectively, considering the *tsunami*'s roots and legacies. Here, I aim to do the same for English amulets.[638]

The chapter begins by considering the fate of the Folklore Society's collections and distinguishing between 'folklore' and 'folklife'. It then explores how even as primary collecting by the FLS, PRM and MAA dwindled, attempts were made to locate and catalogue material folklore at national and international levels. At the same time, the classification and analysis of earlier folklore collections — including material magic — continued within individual institutions. Much of this work was undertaken by women, including Ellen Ettlinger, Enid Porter and

[637] A. Moutu, 'Collection as a Way of Being', in Heare *et. al.*, *Thinking*, 94-97.
[638] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*; Larson, *Infinity*.

Beatrice Blackwood, each of whom is considered in this chapter. Toms' post-war legacy is then addressed. The line of intellectual descent explored runs through three archaeologists, Pitt-Rivers, Toms and Merrifield. Finally, the chapter considers how Toms' collections and writing have inspired new interpretations by geologists and palaeontologists

7.1. From 'folklore' to 'folklife'

By 1928, nearly four decades after the International Folk-lore Congress, the FLS no longer harboured ambitions to found its own museum. Gradually, the Society's focus moved from accumulating new material to taking stock. Its President, A.R. Wright, dismissed the suggestion for reasons of expense. Instead, he proposed that 'a very valuable publication as an appendant to our museum would be a *catalogue raisonne* of folklore objects preserved in the museums of the United Kingdom', noting that 'this was proposed in an Annual Report so far back as 1899, and some work… has been done upon it'.[639] Such a catalogue was never produced, and as museums redefined their boundaries, material that was initially intended to be or perceived as a unified collection was divided and distributed. Douglas comments that when the FLS' collection was split up, 'this left a legacy of incomplete and half-gathered holdings, which languish today without a shared home, much less a coherent sense of how their collection and interpretation may be seen to interconnect' as the concepts of survivals, folklore

[639] A. R. Wright, 'Presidential Address… 1928', 25, referring to A. Nutt, 'Presidential Address', *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 10, No. 1, 1899), 71.

and magic on which they were founded 'became outmoded relics in their own right'.[640]

In the same year, 1928, a 'Report of the Sub-Committee on Classification' prepared by the British National Committee on Folk Arts and Crafts, a League of Nations initiative, appealed 'for the help of museum curators in the preparation of a catalogue of Folk Arts and Crafts in British Museums', to be reported to the 'first International Congress of Folk Arts and Crafts' in Prague.[641] Questionnaires were circulated to museums all over Britain, but these efforts appear to have been fruitless.[642] This international project suggests a move away from the evolutionary emphasis of early anthropologists and folklorists towards the interest in arts and crafts which became more prevalent in the post-war era. In 1929, for example, papers in *Folklore* on *Roumanian Peasant Art* and a *Congress on Folk Art in Antwerp* made apparent a rising interest in 'folk arts' and 'folklife'.[643]

A new wave of 'folk museums', most of which were founded after the Second World War, approached obsolescent British popular culture from the perspective of 'folklife' rather than 'folklore'. Dorson defines 'folklore' and 'folklife' as the study of oral traditions and of material culture respectively, but admits that what he calls 'social folk customs' lie between these categories. He describes these as 'often closely bound up with deeply held folk beliefs' and 'customs that have

[640] Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals', 244.
[641] MAA FG1/4/8.
[642] MAA FG1/4/8 is an example of such a questionnaire, but no report has been found.
[643] L.W.G. Malcolm, 'Exhibition of Roumanian Peasant Art', *Folklore* (Vol. 40, No. 1, Mar. 31, 1929), 84; M. Karpeles, 'Congress on Folk Art in Antwerp', *Folklore* (Vol. 40, No. 2, Jun. 30, 1929), 192-193.

acquired considerable magical and sacred potency'.[644] Again, our category of 'magic' lies in this liminal zone between material and immaterial culture. New 'folklife' museums were opened in the 'Celtic' nations (the Highland Folk Museum, Scotland in 1944; St Fagans Welsh Folk Museum in 1948; the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in 1958), but these have been conspicuously absent in England.[645] The Cambridge and County Folk Museum (CCFM), founded in 1936, is an early example of this new wave of British folklife museums, but its remit is local and regional rather than national. The difference reflects the position of the 'Celtic' nations as colonised subjects in need of re-enforcing their own identity, as opposed to the confident position of England as an imperial power. Hugh Cheape's 1993 volume *Tools and Traditions: Studies in European Ethnology*, for example, looks towards Continental rather than English folklife studies and museums as inspiration for Scottish folklife studies.[646] The interplay between magical thinking (the belief that one's thoughts, words or actions can affect the world without material causality) and scientific thinking (the understanding that one's actions can only affect the world in rational ways) has fulfilled a different role in the formation of English identity than for the 'Celtic' nations of the British Isles and Ireland.

Dorson explains that in the mid-twentieth century, 'from museums and institutes a compelling interest developed in the material culture rather than the oral literature of the folk, leading to the creation of a Society for Folk Life Research in

[644] R. M. Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 3.
[645] This phenomenon is discussed by Wingfield in 'Greater Britain'. MERL also opened in the 1950s, but it does not have the same national profile or use the word 'folk' in its title.
[646] H. Cheape, *Tools and Traditions: studies in European ethnology presented to Alexander Fenton* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993).

1962, with strong centres at the Welsh Folk Museum in Cardiff and the Ulster Folk Museum in Belfast'.[647] But while indigenous folklife museums featured prominently in twentieth century Irish, Scottish and Welsh cultural life, early-twentieth-century plans for an English national folklore or folklife museum remain unfulfilled.[648] Even today, England is symbolised by the eighteenth-century British Museum — not a museum explicitly about Britain or England, but a material reminder of the global imperialism through which the world antiquities within it were acquired. The BM looks staunchly outward to the world, whereas the National Museum of Wales (NMW), founded two centuries later, remains steadfastly inward-looking.[649] England's apparent fascination with the 'other' can be considered to be a defining property of English imperial self-identity, bolstered by comparing itself with and collecting 'others', whether peoples and territories (through colonialism and empire), academic knowledge (through natural and human sciences) or objects (representing 'other cultures' as microcosms in museums).

From the 1930s, Britain's focus shifted from its empire to shouldering the burden of war in Europe, while efforts to bolster distinct national and regional identities supplanted a global perspective in museums. As well as precipitating decolonisation, the Second World War brought a new wave of nostalgia. During and after the war, a number of folklife museums were founded as part of broader cultural efforts to salvage both rural and urban ways of life that were changing

[647] Dorson, *British Folklorists*, 441.
[648] See Rivière, 'Success and Failure', 141-151 and Wingfield, 'Greater Britain', on the relationships between the English collections at the PRM and MERL.
[649] The NMW transferred its world ethnographic collections to the Horniman in the 1980s, though retaining its anomalous Lovett collection of English amulets.

fast. Douglas, Rivière and Wingfield have examined attempts to found a museum of English folklore between the 1890s and the 1950s, when the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) finally opened in Reading.[650] Wingfield compares the temporal and geographical sweep of the PRM with the British focus of MERL, founded seven decades later in 1951. He attributes their differences to 'the ideological shifts that accompanied Britain's movement from an expansionist imperial power in 1860 to an actively decolonizing nation in 1960'.[651] Major regional English social and industrial history museums, including those at Beamish in the North of England and Ironbridge in the West Midlands, also had their roots in collecting and salvage projects which began in the post-war decade but came to fruition as public museums later, in the 1970s.[652] Meanwhile, older provincial museums started to focus on their local collections in a new way — as secular, rational, modern, magic-free 'folklife' and, from the 1950s, 'social history'. Such museums began to divest themselves of collections that were thought to have little local relevance. They came to regard international ethnographic material as not locally relevant and better placed in the hands of specialists.

The Taunton museum, for example, handed over its world ethnography collection — including Tylor's material — to the Liverpool Museum (now World Museum Liverpool, WML) in 1941, in response to the latter's plea to replace its

[650] Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals'; Rivière, 'Success and Failure'; Wingfield, 'Greater Britain'.
[651] Wingfield, 'Greater Britain', 245.
[652] See Beamish, 'The History of Beamish', *www.beamish.org.uk/about/history-of-beamish* and Ironbridge Gorge Museums, 'The Ironbridge Gorge Museums Timeline', *www.ironbridge.org.uk/our-story/timeline*, accessed 30 Mar. 2021. R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory Vol. 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994) and Bennett, *Birth* (110-121, 124, 127) both critique the sanitised, aestheticised version of industrial history presented by these institutions.

war-damaged collections., while much of Elworthy's international material was transferred to the PRM in 1968.[653] In 1975, the Museum Ethnographers Group was set up to defend and promote world ethnography collections, which for historical reasons typically contain material from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania rather than Europe.[654] Global collections were split between different geographical departments — as Tylor's have been in Liverpool — thus masking the collectors' intentions, the reasons they brought these disparate things together in the first place, so opening them up to new interpretations.

In the early-twentieth century, Lovett had supported efforts to found a museum of English folklore with magic at its core, echoed today by the artist Simon Costin's embryonic Museum of British Folklore.[655] By contrast, folk museums founded in the mid-twentieth century — including MERL —focused on crafts and trades, containing no charms, amulets or artefacts of 'magic'. During this time a shift in emphasis can also be discerned, from representing the supernatural to the secular in mainstream museums. This shift is reflected in *Folklore*: in 1949 '*A scheme for the development of a museum of English Life and Traditions*' reported on an 'Exploratory Committee on the Ethnography of Great Britain' formed by the RAI in collaboration with the FLS; the committee included the familiar names

[653] This information and is taken from a notice pasted by St George Gray into the front of the museum's accession register. The reasons for the sale are clearly expressed as firstly, to help Liverpool to 'replace some of the losses they had sustained by war damage', secondly to 'dispose of specimens of savage art which were no longer required' in Taunton, and thirdly that the specimens' educational value would be enhanced by 'these additions to a large ethnographical collection' (signed H. St George Gray, Curator, 1 April 1942). On the Liverpool transfer, see also J. Ostapcowicz, 'A Port to the World: Native American Collections at the Liverpool Museum', *American Indian Art Magazine* (Spring 2005), 72-73.

[654] Museum Ethnographers Group, 'About MEG', *www.museumethnographersgroup.org.uk/* (Museum Ethnographers Group, 2013), accessed 18 Jun. 2012.

[655] E. Lovett, 'A Folk Museum', *The Reliquary* (Vol. 11, 1905), 142; S. Costin 'About the Museum. Our History', *museumofbritishfolklore.com/* (no date), accessed 7 Aug. 2017.

Hildburgh, Blackwood and the BM curator William Fagg, among others.[656] The report bemoans that 'practically every European country has its National Folk Museum or Museum of Popular Art, except England'. By this time, the interests of those who would create such a museum had shifted from evolutionary theory to the development of 'national character'. The preservation of 'old agricultural implements… disappearing industries, trades and crafts… costumes… complete windmills, farm buildings, and cottages' replaced the pursuit of tangible evidence for the intangible cultural forms of superstition and magic.[657]

I suggest several possible historical reasons for the shift in focus from the magical to the mundane, and from 'folklore' to 'folklife' in mainstream mid-twentieth century museums. Firstly, English society as a whole was becoming more secular and less religious as a whole. Secondly, the intellectual context in which magical objects were collected had faded away; both comparative anthropology and its 'museum phase' were past their prime by the 1920s. The objects became less prominent in collections concomitantly with the social evolutionary theories they had been collected to demonstrate. Thirdly, the forms taken by the objects themselves may have contributed to their demise in museums. As we have seen, they were generally commercially manufactured, minimally modified or found objects. These could not demonstrate the great skill, artistry or rural industry that nostalgic 'folklife' museums were looking for. Finally, as the First and Second World Wars sapped Britain's international power, attention turned inward from its empire. Richards and Clayton, in their

[656] Bagshawe, 'Scheme for the Development of a Museum of English Life and Traditions', *Folklore* (Vol. 60, No. 2, Jun. 1949), 296-300.
[657] Bagshawe, 'Scheme', 296.

study of English musical identity, note that as the empire declined from the Edwardian era onwards, 'a more insular sense of identity' prevailed.[658] Similarly, as England shed its imperial identity, museums became a part of its search for a new one. England's new self-image had to be a positive one, so elements of traditional life which engendered feelings of shame rather than pride — including 'superstition' or magic — were omitted.

Moreover, folklore may have contributed to its own demise. Ronald Hutton has argued that Tylor and Frazer's 'hidden subtext' 'was to discredit religion in general, and Christianity in particular, in order to assist the progress of humanity towards a more perfect rationalism', and that the *Golden Bough* itself contributed to the demise of Christianity.[659] Perhaps their efforts were so successful that the collections they inspired were no longer needed, as they seemed to have fulfilled their pedagogical purpose. Palmié argues that 'the so-called "comparative method" against which Boas… had begun to rail more than a generation earlier, and which formed the cornerstone of Frazer's enterprise, was no longer a subject of debate. By the 1930s, at the latest, it had become irrelevant'.[660] The same could be said of amulets in museums. By the mid-twentieth century, museums no longer felt impelled to expend effort on debunking magic and religion. This conspicuous absence of magic in folklife (and later, social history) museums meant that an important element of popular culture, indeed of modernity itself, was sidelined or ignored. Instead, mainstream museums reveled in nostalgia for

[658] Richards and Clayton, *English Musical Identity,* 'Introduction'.
[659] Hutton, *Moon*, 114, 117.
[660] Palmié, *Golden Bough*, 4.

manual skills and community life, both rural and urban, in the face of mechanisation and industrialisation.

In the immediate post-war decades, the journal *Folklore* still contained the section *Folklore Notes and Museum News* through which interested individuals continued to report on collections and displays relevant to folklore around the UK and beyond; museums reviewed in 1949 included the CCFM, PRM, Welsh Folk Museum and City Museum, Bristol. In 1952, a century after the Great Exhibition, *Folklore* contained reviews relating to the Festival of Britain. Academic interest in material magic had turned full circle during the century, from Pitt-Rivers' first displays of 'superstition' at Bethnal Green, through floods of material entering 'scientific' museums in Oxbridge and London, to renewed academic disinterest in the material culture of magic amongst folklorists and anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century. Collecting and classifying folklore continued, but in the less material form of lists, for example a *Note on Central Register for British Folklore Research* in 1956. *Museum News* was finally replaced by *Folklore Notes* in 1979.

7.2. Ellen Ettlinger: taking stock in Oxford and London

Returning now to the 1930s and 1940s, the folklorist Ellen Ettlinger was the first writer to attempt a re-appraisal of the abundance of charms and amulets already amassed by museums beyond the FLS' own collections.[661] Born in Germany to a

[661] A prolific reviewer of books on folklore, especially those in her native German, Ettlinger's later reviews included the following of books on amulets: 'Amulett und Talisman, Erscheinungsform

wealthy Jewish family, Ettlinger fled to England in 1938 and settled in Oxfordshire. Already an avid folklorist, she soon became an active member of the FLS and in 1948, she founded the Oxford and District Folklore Society together with Blackwood and Christina Hole (1896-1985), herself a prolific writer on folklore and editor of *Folklore*.[662] Amulets were of particular interest to Ettlinger, who was born too late to participate in the first wave of collecting, but attempted to assimilate elements of its material remains, bridging the first and second folk revivals. In 1939 she published an overview of *British Amulets in London Museums* and in 1943, a similar one on *Documents of British Superstition in Oxford*. Her stated aim was 'to compile a descriptive catalogue of British charms and amulets exhibited in the museums of the British Isles'.[663] She pointed out in her *Oxford* paper that 'the literature on amulets is immense. In all languages and all times and in all branches of literature we find records of them'.[664] In her *London* paper, she noted that museum collections of amulets fell into two groups, which she termed the 'A museums' and 'B museums'. She explained that 'in the A-museums the latest amulets date until about 1800 — in the B-museums they start about 1800, coming down to the present time'. In the 'A-museums', she explained, 'the arrangement [of objects] is made from different points of view, that is, according to their species, their substance, their style, their origin, etc.' and their 'value lies in the artistic or historical quality of the object, and not in its nature as an amulet'. Her examples include a fifteenth-century 'unicorn's horn' at

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und Geschichte by L.Hansmann and L. Kriss-Rettenbeck', *Folklore* (Vol. 77, No. 4, Winter 1966), 305-306; 'Decorative and Symbolic Uses of Vertebrate Fossils by K. P. Oakley', *Folklore* (Vol. 87, No. 1, 1976), 119.

[662] The biographical information here is from A. Petch, 'Ellen Ettlinger (1902-1994)', *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Ettlinger-biography.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2014), accessed 18 Dec. 2020.

[663] E. Ettlinger, 'British Amulets in London Museums', *Folklore* (Vol. 50, No. 2, Jun. 1939), 148.

[664] Ettlinger, 'Documents', 149.

New College, Oxford and a seventeenth-century stone with a Christian inscription in the Ashmolean's Tradescant collection. In the 'B-museums', by contrast, 'the exhibited objects are subordinated to one scientific ideal', for example at 'the Horniman Museum from the ethnographical standpoint and… the Wellcome Museum from the medical point of view'.[665] My survey confirms that Ettlinger's conclusions about amulets in general are also true of English amulets specifically, not only for museums in London and Oxford but for those in the rest of England. I found few artefacts of popular English magic predating 1800 in English museums and therefore elected to base my study around what Ettlinger referred to as 'B' museums, but extending my remit beyond Ettlinger's London and Oxford to the rest of England.

7.3. Enid Porter: folklore and folklife in Cambridge

Just as international material was removed from local history museums, local and British material was relocated from anthropology museums. Part of the FLS's 'folklore' collection was transferred from the MAA to the Cambridge and County Folk Museum (CCFM) in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Although documentation is insufficient to tell us exactly when the transfer happened, it suggests that some of the FLS' material may have arrived on 'permanent loan' from the MAA between 1937 and 1939 — that is, soon after the CCFM opened in 1936 but before Haddon died in 1940.[666] George Monger, however, states that the FLS' 'British material was deposited at the… [CCFM],

[665] Ettlinger, 'Documents', 228.
[666] Many of the items were not accessioned until the 1980s, but some numbers in the CCFM's loan book suggest this scenario.

whose curator was Enid Porter'.[667] This pushes the transfer date forward to 1947, when Porter was appointed Assistant Curator, or more likely 1950, when she became Curator.

Porter (1908-1984) was born into a middle-class family in Essex but had family links in Cambridgeshire. Having graduated in modern languages from University College London, she worked as a school teacher before joining the CCFM. Like Toms, she was committed to broadening access to museums. As well as being a committee member of the FLS she specialised in local folklore and superstitions, collecting folk traditions in Cambridgeshire villages and writing and editing several books on the subject between 1963 and 1974, so the opportunity to acquire relevant material from the MAA would have appealed to her.[668] At the CCFM under Porter, the FLS' British artefacts were no longer contextualised according to evolutionary theories, but as part of a growing interest in British 'folklife' (as opposed to 'folklore') that began to emerge after the First World War and peaked after the Second World War.[669]

At the time of my survey in 2012, the CCFM held about one hundred items classified as 'folklore'. The terminology used indicates that even in the context of a 'folk' museum, the more magical or ritual material merited this classification.

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[667] G. Monger, *'A Lucky Wisp of Hay? Material culture and the Folklore Society'* (unpublished conference paper presented at the annual conference of the FLS, held at the PRM, 12–13 May 2005, author's copy), no page numbers.
[668] Porter's works include Ca*mbridgeshire Customs & Folklore* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1969) and *The Folklore of East Anglia* (London: B.T. Batesford, 1974). The biographical information here is taken from 'Enid Porter', *Enid Porter Project: bringing folk traditions to life in five Cambridgeshire villages*, *www.enidporterproject.org.uk/content/category/enid-porter* (Cambridge: Cambridgeshire County Council, after 2014), accessed 18 Feb. 2018.
[669] Douglas, *Material Culture*, 10.

Although most of the items categorised as 'folklore' were not formally accessioned until the 1980s, just under half are said to have come from the FLS. These comprise a variety of items that would have been perceived as 'survivals' by the Society, the majority of which could be classed as 'magical' or 'supernatural'. All or most are British, confirming that British 'folklore' was becoming differentiated from world 'anthropology' at this time; the latter remained at the MAA, or was transferred to Oxford at a later date. The MoC's FLS material includes a fairly typical range of Scottish and Irish (with a few English and Welsh) charms, amulets and other magical objects (those used for divination, for example) as well as secular items.[670] The CCFM's non-FLS objects which are classified as 'folklore' could also be defined as 'magical', and include at least fifteen concealed objects and hoards (shoes, bones, witch bottles etc.).[671] That much of the 'folklore' material is Scottish — substantially from Maclagan — suggests a continuing association of 'folklore' with 'Celtic' nations. The CCFM under Porter was unusual in acquiring material magic in a 'folklife' rather than ethnographic setting. Perhaps this could be linked to the museum's early date, or to Porter's personal interests.

The transfer of the FLS material away from the MAA was part of a broader post-war trend. Similarly, the bulk of Elworthy's collection was transferred from

[670] The 12 FLS items that are most apparently amulets include the 'lucky wisp of hay' referred to by George Monger in *'Lucky Wisp*', as well as 'nails… from toothache stone', a snake's head ammonite, a holed stone, sheep's shoulder blade bone, a 'knot charm of red wool' and so on. The remaining 27 FLS items include several relating to the astragals/knucklebones game, a mummers' costume *etc*. Lovett, too, collected at wrote about astragals in 'The Ancient and Modern Game of Astragals', *Folklore* (Vol. 12, No. 3, 1901), 280-293.

[671] These non-FLS 'folklore' artefacts include love charms (dragon's blood 'love potion' and a 'courtship token'), items that are either identified as, or were highly likely to have been collected as charms and amulets (a caul, moles' feet against rheumetism, holed stones) ,and assorted other items including those relating to the game of knucklebones or to religious ritual ('Good Friday bread'), as well as items which may or may not have been charms — keys, coins etc.

Somerset to the PRM in 1968; in 1984, over 400 Lovett items were transferred to the PRM from the Wellcome Institute (now the Wellcome Collection), where some 150 remain. At the MAA, components of the FLS' material that remained after these mass transfers received little attention. Starr's vast collection remained packed away until it was finally accessioned in the 1980s, after which it was partially exhibited in 1989 and officially transferred from the FLS to the MAA in the 2010s.[672] From the 1989 redisplay until another in 2012, the museum's small European anthropology display had focused only on Europe's margins – traditional life in the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. By contrast the museum's new introductory gallery, which opened in 2012, includes a small display of 'folklore' items. This contains, among other things, 'a witches' broom from [Margaret] Murray' and Mediterranean charms.[673] This display is intended to illustrate the history of the museum and to honestly reflect the range of material it holds. The MAA's 'anthropological collections' web page, updated in 2014, begins by informing us that 'MAA cares for works of art and artefacts from Asia, Africa, Oceania and native America, and those representing British and European folklore'.[674] This contrasts with *The Proper Study of Mankind*, published 30 years earlier, which failed to mention the British and European collections. Folklore receives more attention in *Gifts and Discoveries*, a 2011 history of the museum written by Mark Elliott and Nicholas Thomas, who curated the new introductory displays.[675] The folklore collections are now

[672] An uncatalogued, unsigned 1980s note in a working file at the MAA describes the collection's rediscovery 'underneath 60 years of accumulated dust'.
[673] MAA 1939.132.
[674] MAA, 'Anthropological Collections', *maa.cam.ac.uk/category/collections-2/ anthropological-collections/* (Cambridge: MAA, updated in 2019), accessed 20 Jan. 2014.
[675] M. Elliott and N. Thomas, *Gifts and Discoveries: the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge* (London: La Scala, 2011).

acknowledged as part of the history of anthropology, folklore and museums. Both the Owen and Starr collections are considered to be culturally important in their own right. They also demonstrate the global nature of the collections in which English amulets were couched.

7.4. Beatrice Blackwood: re-grouping at the PRM

At the PRM, the collection and classification of amulets by no means ceased with Balfour's death in 1939. Gosden and Larson explain that despite his efforts to provide a comprehensive understanding of human culture through collecting and classifying material data, he left a massive documentation backlog when he died in office. Tom Penniman succeeded him as curator, remaining in post until his retirement in 1963.[676] In the same year (1939), Blackwood was appointed Demonstrator in Ethnology, becoming the PRM's first paid female member of staff. Penniman is known as a follower of Pitt-Rivers' principles and methodology, and 'later described his work in terms of "restoring" the Museum to Pitt-Rivers' original plans after years of overcrowding'.[677] There is little indication that Penniman had any interest in magic or amulets, and he is not specifically associated with any of those on display or in storage. Like Balfour's work under Tylor, Blackwood seems to have undertaken much of the PRM's hands-on curatorial work under Penniman.

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[676] F. Larson and A. Petch, '"Hoping for the best, expecting the worse": Thomas Kenneth Penniman — Forgotten Curator of the PRM', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (Vol. 18, 2006), 125, 134; see also A. Petch, 'Penniman and the study of technologies and materials', *England: The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Penniman-and-technology.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 29 Jul. 2016.
[677] Larson and Petch, *Hoping*, 128.

Blackwood was born into a middle-class London family and studied English at Oxford University. She took the Diploma in Anthropology under Balfour in 1916-18, inheriting his interest in material technology, and conducted fieldwork in many parts of the world including Africa, Oceania and North America. She began her professional life in the Human Anatomy Department, which was based at the University Museum of Natural History, before being transferred to the PRM in 1936. She was appointed Lecturer in Ethnology in 1946 and continued in this role until her retirement in 1959, after which she volunteered at the museum until her death in 1975.[678] During the time of Blackwood and Penniman's employment at the PRM, work on its amulets collection focused on cataloguing and classifying rather than primary field collecting.[679] In the PRM's Annual Report for 1940 Penniman commented, somewhat facetiously, that 'Mr Gibbs [a documentation volunteer] has greatly improved and developed the catalogue of our many amulets. Apparently we have an appropriate charm against any evil that could befall anyone in the wide world, whatever his beliefs may be'.[680]

Other than those in Pitt-Rivers' founding collection, the vast majority of the PRM's English amulets were transferred from other institutions at a later date; just 90, from 20 different sources including Elworthy and Lovett, were accessioned after 1884 but before 1968. Blackwood, still volunteering after Penniman's retirement in 1963, was instrumental in transferring two of the

[678] The biographical information here is from A. Petch, 'Blackwood and Technology', *England, The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Blackwood-and-technology.html,* (Oxford: PRM, 2009), accessed 3 Jun. 2020.
[679] Blackwood later wrote up her expertise in *The classification of artefacts in the Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford*, Occasional Papers on Technology, No. 2 (Oxford: PRM, 1970).
[680] Cited by A. Petch, '*PRM Documentation Part 1: Annual Report entries about museum documentation 1888-1958*', *England: The Other Within*, *england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-PRM-Documentation-1.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2011), accessed 10 Jan. 2018.

PRM's biggest collections of charms and amulets to the museum, those of the FLS (from the MAA) in 1965 and Elworthy (from the Taunton museum) in 1968. Monger notes that 'in 1964 Beatrice Blackwood wrote a short report about the [FLS] collection for the [FLS] committee, pending the transfer of parts of the collection to the PRM in 1965'.[681] In her report, Blackwood explained that the FLS' collection fell into three categories: the Starr and Owen collections, 'items connected with the Folklore of the British Isles', and 'a large number of miscellaneous ethnographical objects, including amulets and charms'. These three groups (with some exceptions) are now housed at the MAA, the MoC and the PRM respectively. In November 1964, the Council of the FLS 'decided to limit its collection to specimens illustrating the folk-lore of the British Isles. Since the Cambridge Museum did not wish to retain the other specimens (apart from certain series), Council unanimously decided to offer them to the PRM as an unconditional gift'.[682] In 1965, over 300 accessions from the FLS' collection including 66 amulets, most of which are African and Asian, were transferred from the MAA to the PRM. These are poorly documented in contrast to the contextualised Starr and Owen 'series' which the MAA chose to retain.[683]

Blackwood also oversaw the transfer of Taunton's 'Elworthy Collection of amulets and charms' to the PRM. In 1968, 20 English amulets were transferred

[681] The quotes in this paragraph are from Monger, 'Lucky Wisp', no page numbers. I have been unable to locate Blackwood's report.
[682] This note is repeated on each PRM database record for which the FLS is a source name. Here the 'Cambridge Museum' refers to the MAA and the 'certain series' to the Starr and Owen collections. At the PRM, the FLS' entire collection was accessioned under the number 1965.3. A PRM Related Documents File (RDF) contains a list of 'Specimens from the Folk-Lore Society's Collection' and a 'supplementary list' of FLS items with similar entries.
[683] Thirteen of these amulets are Congolese, probably from the English trader R.E. Dennett; other than three Burmese charms against the evil eye, the rest have no source named.

from the Somerset County Museum on 'permanent loan' [*sic*], together with most of the rest of Elworthy's collection (480 objects in total, most of which are Mediterranean amulets).[684] Correspondence between Blackwood and Mr P.A. Langmaid, Taunton's Assistant Keeper, indicates disinterest at the Somerset end combined with perfunctory enthusiasm at the Oxford end.[685] At the PRM, Elworthy's objects were incorporated into the 'Europe: amulets' section of the main, geographically categorised card catalogue, although not into the amulets card catalogue created during Balfour's curatorship (see Chapter 4), which by this time appears to have become obsolete.[686] Ironically, the FLS and Taunton disposed of their relevant collections at the height of the second folk revival in the 1960s, when English folk culture received renewed popular interest.

Amulets continued to enter the PRM after Blackwood's departure. Over 6,700 were transferred from the Wellcome Collection in 1985, notably Hildburgh's and de Mortillet's from continental Europe, as well as 417 English amulets which the WHMM had acquired from Lovett. Frances Larson describes the lifelong collecting obsession of Sir Henry Wellcome, a wealthy pharmaceutical entrepreneur who founded the WHMM.[687] Typically for his time, Wellcome regarded material objects as scientific data in themselves, but when he died, over a million artefacts remained in storage and his vision was unrealised. Larson has

[684] This oxymoronic phrase is taken from the PRM's catalogue and indicates that no money changed hands. See PRM, 'Collections online', *www.prm.ox.ac.uk/databases.html* (Oxford: PRM, no date), accessed 19 Jun. 2012.
[685] In a letter to Langmaid dated 3rd April 1968, Blackwood requested a 'transfer' of the material, saying that the collection would 'usefully supplement our own extensive series' of amulets. In a letter to Blackwood dated 6th August, Langmaid — perhaps rashly — stated that 'it is extremely unlikely that the Somerset Archaeological Society will want the collection returned and I am glad that you find it interesting. It is certainly a more appropriate home' (RDF, PRM).
[686] Elin Bornemann, an Assistant Curator at the PRM, understands this catalogue to have been created during Balfour's time as Curator (personal communication by email, 24 Apr. 2012).
[687] Larson, *Infinity*.

emphasised that Wellcome's collecting was comprehensive and indiscriminate, accompanied by a paucity of research and documentation. The ultimate aim of his 'phantom museum', she explains, was to illustrate the history of medicine and its predecessors with objects, which were arranged in evolutionary sequence and expected to 'speak for themselves'.[688] Given this context, the amulets in Wellcome's collection were presumably included to illustrate a 'magical' or 'superstitious' phase in his history of medicine. Also transferred to the PRM at this time were 6,000 amulets from de Mortillet, the subject of the PRM's recent research project *Small Blessings*.[689] Together, these more than doubled the PRM's store of worldwide amulets to over 11,000. Between the 1985 Wellcome transfer and 2013, just two English amulets were newly acquired.[690]

The mass transfers seem to have been as much due to a lack of interest by their source institutions as they were to active interest by the PRM. They reflect the latter's growing reputation as a comprehensive gathering place for magical and miscellaneous objects that did not fit into other museums' collecting trajectories, and its ability to assimilate a wide range of objects into its overarching 'series'. The FLS' collection, in common with the other collections of amulets acquired *en masse*, has on the whole remained in storage at the PRM. Notably, there are no items from either the FLS' or Elworthy's collections in the museum's current magic and amulets display, suggesting that the exhibit's core was assembled at

[688] Larson, *Infinity*; see also K. Arnold and D. Olsen (eds.). *Medicine Man: The Forgotten Museum of Henry Wellcome* (London: The British Museum Press, 2003).
[689] 'What is an amulet?', *Small Blessings: Amulets at the Pitt Rivers Museum*, *www.prm.ox.ac.uk/smallblessings.html* (Oxford: PRM, 2012), accessed 25 Jan. 2016.
[690] Both of these are from women. One is a Somerset willow rattle for newlyweds, bequeathed by Dorothy Wright in 1997, the other is a coin found in the keyhole of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, and donated in 2013 by Taissa Csáky.

an earlier date.[691] Nevertheless, the acquisition of such large collections after Blackwood's time demonstrates that the PRM's collections have continued to grow and metamorphose. This situation backs up the hypothesis put forward by Gosden and Larson in *Knowing Things* that 'objects organized in the Museum by physical type attracted other objects with similar external features'.[692] Because the PRM developed a reputation as a place that collected and displayed charms and amulets, it has continued to exert a centripetal force on such material. The PRM has offered such assemblages a home but until recently, scant attention.

7.5. Toms' legacies: the magic of archaeology

Chapter 6 told the story of Toms' collection up until his death and before the Second World War. Here I take the narrative forward, considering how its post-war agency contrasts with that of the FLS' material. Toms' main followers have been archaeologists, palaeontologists and historians of magic, rather than anthropologists and folklorists. He left a legacy in the archaeological study of English folk magic, combining his archaeological training by Pitt-Rivers with his interest in folklore. Holleyman's comparison of Toms with Pitt-Rivers includes 'some personal memories' of Toms by his erstwhile assistant Ralph Merrifield (1913-1995), who has in turn been influential in the archaeology of ritual and magic since the 1980s.[693] Like Toms, Merrifield was a professional archaeologist and curator, specialising in the archaeology of Roman London and spending

[691] The majority (607) of the displayed objects were accessioned no later than the 1950s; the remaining 28 were acquired in the 1970s or later.
[692] Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 113.
[693] Merrifield, 'Memories', 29-29.

much of his career at London's Guildhall Museum and the Museum of London; the Guildhall Museum had turned down Pitt-Rivers' collection a century before.[694] Merrifield dedicated his 1987 book *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* 'to the memory of H S Toms… who was my first mentor in archaeology and folk studies'.[695] From Toms, he inherited 'a general interest in folk customs' that 'led him to take note of evidence of this nature whenever he found it'.[696] Apparently his first foray into public speaking was on a folkloric theme — 'Good Friday Games' — for the Brighton and Hove Archaeology Club, itself founded by Toms.[697]

As Pitt-Rivers mentored Toms, so Toms mentored Merrifield, who was almost four decades his junior. As we saw in Chapter 4, Pitt-Rivers was instrumental in the introduction of scientific methods in archaeology. A generation later, Toms embraced popular magic as a subject worth studying scientifically. Two generations later, Merrifield was able to take this investigation further professionally, and in a new direction. Like Toms, Merrifield was keen to understand archaeological finds in their cultural context. He is best known for re-introducing the study of magic and ritual into academic archaeology through the study deliberately concealed objects. Like the pre-war collectors considered earlier, his work on magic developed later in his career — his paper *Witch*

[694] P. Marsden, 'Obituary: Ralph Merrifield', *www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-ralph-merrifield-1567811.html* (London: The Independent, Fri. 13 Jan. 1995), accessed 29 Nov. 2013. The Guildhall Museum amalgamated with the London Museum in 1975 to become the Museum of London.
[695] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, frontispiece.
[696] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xiii.
[697] A local newspaper report says that 'the lecturer was Mr R. Merrifield, B.A., a young member of the Brighton Museum staff. This was his baptism of fire as far as public lecturing was concerned, and he came through the ordeal with the highest credit… The subject was " "Good Friday Games"': see Anon., 'Good Friday Games in Brighton / Kiss-in-the-Ring and Skipping / and Marbles!', *Brighton & Hove Herald* (18 Jan. 1936).

Bottles and Magical Jugs was published in 1955, when he was in his forties, more than thirty years before his better-known book *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*.[698] In a 1967 *Folklore* paper he wrote about 'motor-car' amulets, a subject that had also fascinated Lovett, who designed his own 'motor-car amulet' and had it manufactured (*figure 7.1*).[699] Merrifield noted the difficulties of studying magic in an academic context in the 1980s, commenting that 'ritual and magic were formerly part of everyday life, but by association with fantasy fiction and occultism they have now acquired an aura of sensationalism that has discouraged investigation'.[700] His book was published well after his retirement, drawing together information accumulated throughout his 40-year curatorial career.[701] When he eventually published on topics that had traditionally been of more interest to antiquarians and folklorists than to archaeologists and historians, he carefully slotted them into a scientific, archaeological framework.

Like Toms, Merrifield used scrupulous archaeological methods to draw intangible conclusions from tangible things. In his book, which he described as the first 'broad survey of the ritual customs of Europe' from prehistory until the twentieth century, he emphasised the point that 'superstitious ritual can be studied objectively like any other human behaviour'.[702] He recalled of Toms that in addition to acquainting him with archaeology and what he termed 'savage art', 'above all, he introduced me to folk-lore… I have never quite accepted, any more

[698] R. Merrifield, 'Witch Bottles and Magical Jugs', *Folklore* (Vol. 66, No. 1, Mar. 1955), 195-207; Merrifield, *Archaeology*. For a list of his publications on folk magic, published from the 1950s onwards, see B. Hoggard, 'Ralph Merrifield', *Apotropaios*, *www.apotropaios.co.uk/ralph-merrifield.html* (Worcester: Apotropaios, no date), accessed 11 Nov. 2013.
[699] R. Merrifield, 'A Curious Object seen on Motor-Cars', *Folklore* (Vol. 78, Issue 2, 1967).
[700] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xiii.
[701] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xvi.
[702] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 184.

than Toms himself did, that human technology and artefacts are necessarily more worthy subjects for study than human beliefs and customs'.[703] In this comment, he implied that he and Toms' interest in 'belief and customs' went beyond Pitt-Rivers' interest in 'technology and artefacts' alone. Merrifield pioneered the archaeological study of material evidence for magical practices, in particular deliberately concealed objects, from a historically embedded perspective rather than assuming them to be evolutionary 'survivals'. He also revived academic use of the term 'magic' in relation to material things.

Merrifield defined magic as Tylor, Frazer and Haddon had, in his own words 'the use of practices intended to bring occult forces under control and so to influence events', in contrast with 'religion' which he used 'to indicate the belief in supernatural or spiritual beings'.[704] 'Ritual', on the other hand, was defined by Merrifield as 'practices intended to gain advantage or avert disaster by the manipulation of supernatural power, whether derived from the impersonal forces of magic or from the intervention of supernatural beings', encompassing both religious and magical practices.[705] He starkly separated 'black' from 'white' magic, and 'magic' from 'religion', as well as contrasting 'ritual' activity, which 'implies some mystical purpose', with 'ceremonial' activity, which can be 'purely social'.[706] Merrifield's position shows continuity with that of Toms and his intellectual predecessors in that he continued to arrange magic and religion in an evolutionary sequence, proclaiming that 'from primitive animism to developed

[703] Holleyman, *Dorset Archeologists*, 36-37.
[704] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 150, 6.
[705] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xiii.
[706] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 6.

paganism, from paganism to Christianity, from traditional Catholicism to Protestantism, and even from religious faith to scientific rationalism, the same kinds of simple ritual have survived to give comfort and a sense of security to humble people'.[707] Toms, howevever, had written in the context of an academic landscape in which rationality was supposed to have superseded irrationality; by the time that Merrifield was writing, the idea that all humans are rational in their own way had gained credence. Evans-Pritchard's classic study *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*, published in 1937 near the end of Toms' life, had marked a new era in the rational study of irrationality. Like Evans-Pritchard, Merrifield attributed logical thinking to the people he studied, arguing for example that certain written charms 'are not just meaningless mumbo-jumbo, but the product of care and thought, misplaced as it may seem to us'.[708]

Toms, largely through Merrifield, has inspired a more recent coterie of researchers who continue documenting objects of English material magic presumed to have amuletic properties.[709] Merrifield's work remains popular with curators, enthusiasts and academic specialists interested in the history and

[707] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 185.
[708] Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*; Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 147.
[709] Publications about deliberately concealed garments and shoes include E. Cameron, J. Swann, M. Volken, M. and F. Pitt, 'Hidden Shoes and Concealed Beliefs' (*Archaeological Leather Group Newsletter*, No. 7, 1998), 2-6; J. Swann, 'Concealed Shoes in Buildings', *Costume* (Vol. 30, 1996), 5-6; D. Eastop, 'Outside in: making sense of the deliberate concealment of garments within buildings', *Textile, The Journal of Cloth and Culture* (Vol. 4, No. 3, 2006), 238-255. Ian Evans has made comparisons with Australian practices in *Touching Magic: deliberately concealed objects in old Australian houses and buildings* (Doctoral thesis, University of Newcastle, 2010). Authors of a more archaeological inclination who follow Merrifield's work include Brian Hoggard in, for example, 'The archaeology of counter-witchcraft and popular magic', in O. Davies and W. de Blécourt (eds.), *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 167–186 and more recently in *Magical House Protection: the Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019); J. Semmens, 'The Usage of Witch-Bottles and Apotropaic Charms in Cornwall', *Old Cornwall* (Vol. 12, No. 6, 2000), 25–30.

archaeology of English magic, particularly those studying deliberately concealed objects, presumed to be for the magical protection of a property and its inhabitants. Much recent literature on concealed objects cites Merrifield and responds to his call for data collection, much like Haddon's almost 80 years before, contending that 'a definitive work on the subject will remain impossible until much more evidence has been widely and systematically sought'.[710] A number of these researchers have continued to collate the comparative examples that Merrifield called for, including 'witch bottles', shoes, dried cats, animal skulls and written charms concealed in buildings, whether physically or in words and images.[711] The first attempt at online collecting was Dinah Eastop's *Deliberately Concealed Garments* project in the early 2000s, while more recently, the archaeologist Brian Hoggard has introduced crowd-sourcing to the search, encouraging finders to record their discoveries on his website *Apotropaios.*[712] In the twenty-first century, the ubiquity of the Internet has led to a new form of collecting (virtual, online) that allows these objects to be 'collected' whilst remaining *in situ* or in the ownership of their finders; earlier, Toms had used the new techonology of photography in this way.

In contrast to portable amulets, deliberately concealed objects tend to be discovered individually or in small caches *in situ*, and are therefore found in disparate museums and are seldom accompanied by collectors' photographs and

[710] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xiv.
[711] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xvi. Prominent examples include D. Eastop, *Deliberately Concealed Garments Project*, *www.concealedgarments.org/* (Winchester, Textile Conservation Centre, 2010); B. Hoggard, *Apotropaios, www.apotropaios.co.uk/* (Worcester: Apotropaios, no date), both accessed 29 Aug. 2013. Several writers are represented in Hutton, *Physical Evidence*.
[712] Textile Conservation Centre Foundation, 'Deliberately Concealed Garments', accessed 29 Aug. 2013.; B. Hoggard, *Apotropaios, www.apotropaios.co.uk/* (Worcester: Apotropaios, no date), accessed 29 Aug. 2013.

notes. Merrifield noted that 'in most cases… [this material] was not retrieved and recorded by archaeologists but by casual finders, who merely noted what they considered to be interesting, without fully understanding the significance of their find'.[713] Such objects have tended to enter local and specialist museum collections on an *ad hoc* basis as they are found, in contrast to the more systematic collecting practices of antiquarians, folklorists and early anthropologists who collected charms and amulets from their living makers, users and custodians. Concealed objects therefore require different methods of study from portable charms collected from contemporary populations. Recent researchers have noted that because no written evidence has been found for these practices they have taken an archaeological approach, using only the objects, their historical contexts and folkloric comparisons as bases for their interpretation. Nevertheless, comparison with portable charms that have been more comprehensively documented can inform our understanding of deliberately concealed objects.

The fabric of buildings was not the only place that objects were deliberately concealed. We have seen that many amulets and charms were worn hidden in clothing or on domestic animals, as well as in homes or in agricultural buildings. Many of these are known to have had apotropaic purposes, including the holed stones and fossil sea-urchins that Toms collected from Sussex windowsills and doorways. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that items found concealed within buildings, often around what Merrifield identified as liminal or vulnerable spaces like windows, doors or chimneys, are likely to have been part of a

[713] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 184.

continuum of apotropaic artefacts which ranged from small and portable to large and static. Given the recurrent nature of the dangers that amulets were thought to guard against, it seems probable that undocumented objects concealed in buildings are likely to have protected their inhabitants from a similar range of perils — namely lightning, theft, illness and the various consequences of witchcraft and 'overlooking'. The situation of the fossil urchins recorded by Toms is reminiscent of the wider range of deliberately concealed objects later studied by Merrifield and his followers, as well as the portable amulets covered by my survey. We can infer, then, that concealed objects might have served similar, very practical, purposes.

There are differences, though. The fossils, stones and horseshoes that Toms recorded were publicly displayed in visible spaces such as windowsills and doorways. Merrifield, by contrast, focused on objects that were concealed, and he suggested that 'perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this common custom, which has survived until our own times, is the secrecy that seems to surround it'.[714] This, he argued, 'is not necessarily sinister, since people commonly are ashamed of superstition, but it is possible that secrecy was considered necessary for the effectiveness of the rite'.[715] It should be noted, however, that in different circumstances, concealment and revelation have both been considered magically efficacious. As noted earlier, conspicuous display is key to the efficacy of charms against the evil eye found throughout the Mediterranean, the Middle East and

[714] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 133.
[715] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, 134.

beyond, as well as those collected from Sussex windowsills by Toms. The simple act of revealing or concealing can render amulets effective.

7.6. Toms' legacies: the magic of geology

So far, this chapter has considered two ways in which the material remains of folk magic in museums have been revisited in the mid- to late-twentieth century, particularly since the Second World War. First, it looked at how the FLS's collection, deliberately harvested in 'the field' by antiquarians, folklorists and early anthropologists before and during the 'first folk revival', have been re-evaluated, re-grouped and re-stocked. Next, it looked at how Toms' collection has influenced the archaeology of magic, particularly in relation to deliberately concealed objects discovered on an *ad hoc* basis. The third way, to be addressed here, is how museum collections originally assembled for other reasons — in this case, the study of geology and palaeontology — have been revisited for evidence of magical practices. Since the 1960s, Toms' work has captured the interest of academic geologists, palaeontologists and natural history curators intrigued by the folkloric meanings attached to fossils, prehistoric stone artefacts and naturally shaped stones found in their collections. The study of magical stones has been popular amongst students of 'superstition' from Pliny until the present. In the early-twentieth century, Clarke of Scarborough made extensive compilations of references to the subject in his notebooks, while Lovett elaborated on it in his publications. One of just five objects exhibited by Balfour at the 1891 Folk-Lore Congress was a Neolithic stone axe 'built into a house in

Brittany as protection from lightning and thunderbolt[s]'.[716] Balfour's only paper on a folkloric theme was *Concerning Thunderbolts*, published in 1929, the year in which Toms began his collection of apotropaic fossils and stones, although there are no direct references to Balfour in Toms' publications or archives.

A characteristic of folklore and early anthropology was that direct comparisons were made between ancient and contemporary cultures without considering the hundreds or thousands of years of historical change that intervened. More recent writers on magical stones have reprocessed the same ancient and historical sources as well as incorporating late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century interpretations of these (Tylor, Lovett, Toms), together with those of people who recycled them in the later twentieth century (Kenneth Oakley, Michael Bassett), while adding further interpretations of their own. It is perhaps significant that all of these writers — most recently Duffin and McNamara — are primarily geologists or palaeontologists who have come across this curious material, with its human interest beyond natural science, whilst studying geological collections in museums.[717] The objects concerned, perhaps because of their simple, natural forms, have tended to attract the interest of those who straddle the arts and the sciences, making them perfect vehicles for inter-disciplinary attention. As we have seen, some notable early students of material magic began their careers in the natural sciences, including both Balfour and Haddon. These things resisted categorisation; the study of material magic is an area in which disciplinary

[716] Chairman of the Entertainment Committee, 'Catalogue of the exhibition of objects connected with folk-lore in the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House', *The Second International Folk-Lore Congress 1891 Papers and Transactions* (London: David Nutt, 1892), 434.
[717] C. J. Duffin, 'Herbert Toms'; McNamara, *Star-Crossed Stone*.

divisions between archaeology, anthropology and folklore, indeed human and natural sciences, have been repeatedly transgressed.

Duffin and Davidson, a palaeontologist and a historian working together, made the first attempts to re-place the magical uses of fossils and stones into their historical contexts. In addition to ancient and folkloric sources, they use historical source material, as Merrifield did in his research on deliberately concealed objects. In their 2011 paper *Geology and the Dark Side*, they 'discuss the uses of geological materials for divination and protection against the malevolent forces of witchcraft and the like' (namely the Devil and fairies) in mediaeval and later history.[718] They make a comprehensive collection of references to the folklore of fossils since the earliest times — from Pliny through Shakespeare to Toms — concluding that much can be gleaned from earlier literature even though 'oral traditions have rather a patchy written record until the blossoming of interest in folklore mid-way through the nineteenth century'.[719] In doing so, they gather together many of the same references that earlier antiquarians and folklorists did, but arrange them more coherently using their own geological framework. In a separate article, Duffin uses Toms' archives and articles as a basis for describing the variety of ways in which holed stones and *Porosphera* beads have been used 'for luck'. In sum, the main achievement of these writers has been to gather together references to particular sorts of amulets in historical literature, from ancient to modern, so teasing out how they have been understood in different historical contexts.

[718] Duffin and Davidson, 'Dark Side', 8. The authors refer in detail to Oakley's archive at the PRM.
[719] Duffin and Davidson, 'Dark Side', 13.

7.7. Toms' legacies: the magic of palaeontology

In 1911, Christian Blinkenberg was the first link in a chain of writers who attempted to understand the ancient or prehistoric 'mind' through the study of magical artefacts in archaeological contexts, namely fossils and stones invested with supernatural powers or symbolic meanings. Blinkenberg considered the study of prehistoric stone tools known as 'thunderweapons' to be a way of understanding 'the human mind, unhindered by practical considerations' and 'far removed from the established forms and material limits of actual life'.[720] Later, Kenneth Oakley displayed an interest in 'the prehistoric mind' that preoccupied yet later archaeologists including Merrifield and McNamara. Presumably Oakley alluded to Toms', and perhaps Lovett's, work when he mentioned 'the frequency with which [certain fossils] preserved as ornaments on mantelpieces in southern England might be regarded as being due entirely to their decorative value; but superstitions, that is to say relics of former and outmoded beliefs, have played an important part in determining the practice of keeping these fossils'.[721]

Toms' 1926 article on 'Shepherds' Crowns' (one of the popular names given to fossil sea-urchins) in the *Downland Post* has been particularly influential. He took as his starting point a spectacular Early Bronze Age (15-1800 BCE) tumulus

[720] Blinkenberg, *Thunderweapon*, 66.
[721] K. Oakley, *Decorative and symbolic uses of vertebrate fossils* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 27.

excavated at Dunstable Downs, Bedfordshire in 1887, in which a woman and child were found surrounded by hundreds of fossil sea urchins. Following Toms, several more recent writers from the 1960s onwards — Oakley, Basset, Duffin and McNamara — have focused on the same example.[722] For these writers, the subject of material magic is uniquely placed to allow insights into prehistoric or ancient human minds. Through these objects, they aim to understand the past from the viewpoint of its inhabitants — to take an 'emic' point of view — instead of imposing an external framework or 'etic' perspective. In doing so, however, they tend to over-interpret the material evidence. For this reason, it is important that their work is situated historically in relation to the collections concerned.

Oakley was a geologist and palaeontologist with an interest in anthropology. The majority of his publications are highly technical, geological papers. Those focusing on folklore — *The Folklore of Fossils* and his more substantial *Decorative and Symbolic Uses of Vertebrate Fossils* — were published ten years apart.[723] As a natural historian, he divided his writing by each fossil's scientific category, but he also described current and recent meanings attributed to fossils, whether secular or supernatural, speculating about meanings that they may have had in the prehistoric past. However, he did this with caution, saying that 'no more can we easily read the minds of the designers of Roman mosaic pavements' than we can

[722] K. Oakley, 'Folklore of Fossils Part I', *Antiquity* (Vol. 39, No. 153, 1965), 9-16; M. G. Basset, *'Formed Stones', Folklore and Fossils* (Cardiff: NMW, Geological Series No. 1, 1982), 14-5, 29; McNamara, *Star-Crossed Stone*. Until his retirement in 2017, McNamara was a Senior Lecturer in Earth Sciences at the University of Cambridge, specialising in 'the relationship between evolution and development, with particular reference to the fossil record'. He was also Director of the Sedgewick Museum of Earth Sciences (Downing College, 'Dr KenMcNamara', *www.dow.cam.ac.uk /people/dr-ken-mcnamara* (Cambridge: Downing College, updated 2019), accessed 12 Feb, 2018.
[723] K. Oakley, 'Folklore… Part I, 9-16; 'Folklore of Fossils Part II', *Antiquity* (Vol. 39, No. 154, 1965), 117-125; Oakley, *Decorative*.

'interpret the thoughts and ritual practices of the aborigines'. He acknowledged, for example, that we do not know for certain whether the fossils used in prehistoric jewellery or visible in ancient stone tools were purely decorative or had amuletic purposes.[724] His characterisation of the inhabitant of an Early Bronze Age barrow in Gloucestershire as 'somebody with the psychological characteristics of a shaman' because of the placement of fossils in his grave was more speculative. Here, Oakley fell back on early anthropological theory such as Tylor's, proclaiming that the presence of these fossils 'indicates that animistic beliefs were widely held since the beginnings of human thought' and that the fossils were 'imbued with immaterial anima — we could call it the stuff of souls'.[725] Oakley posited the question that later inspired McNamara — the meaning of the fossils to the person who buried them — but cautiously concluded that 'we cannot say. Plumbing the depths of the prehistoric mind is almost more difficult than solving the mysteries of the universe'.[726]

Michael Bassett's 1982 study *Formed Stones, Folklore and Fossils* is a short, illustrated collection of facts and curiosities published by the National Museum of Wales, where he worked as a keeper of palaeontology.[727] Using the museum's collections as his starting point, Bassett's book begins with a scientific explanation of fossils then works his way through every interpretation of them that he can find, ancient or modern, British or worldwide, from ancient Greece to

[724] Oakely, 'Folklore', 13.
[725] Oakely, 'Folkore… Part I', 10.
[726] Oakley, 'Folkore… Part II', 12.
[727] Bassett is an honorary professor at Cardiff University Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences.

native America, whether sacred or secular.[728] Following Oakley's lead, he pursues a Tylorean evolutionary scheme in his interpretation of these. In the earliest phases of culture, he concludes, fossils were just considered 'lucky', in 'more advanced phases' they were attributed with 'magical powers', then 'as animism gives place to belief in gods and ghosts, the fossil became a fetish, or habitat of a god', until finally it was 'no longer an object of specific belief' but 'degenerated' to be just 'lucky' again. In contrast to Oakley, Bassett says of the Dunstable Down burial that it is 'clearly of religious significance'.[729] Essentially, he applies the same treatment to significant fossils that Blinkenberg applied to 'thunderstones' half a century before, that is, crediting them with religious — as opposed to magical — meaning. If we look again at Toms' interpretation, he makes it clear that although the country people of Sussex may have used fossils as amulets to guard against misfortunes of various kinds (including lightning), there is no suggestion of any connection with a thunder-god.

More recently still, McNamara's 2011 book *The Star-Crossed Stone* is intended to be a light-hearted read on a serious subject, again 'plumbing the depths of the prehistoric mind'. McNamara's enthusiastic assessment of the significance of fossil sea-urchins, in particular the importance of the natural five-pointed star motif found on these, owes much to Toms for the examples used. He credits Toms with being the only person to systematically record 'the fading folklore of these fossils in early-twentieth-century England'.[730] Following Toms' article 'Shepherd's Crowns' and Oakley in 'The Folklore of Fossils', McNamara takes the

[728] Bassett, '*Formed Stones',* 17-22.
[729] Bassett, '*Formed Stones',* 15-16.
[730] McNamara, *Star-crossed stone*, 12, 14.

Dunstable Down burial as his centrepiece. He then builds an edifice of meaning around the five-pointed star patterns found on the fossils in this grave, suggesting that every use of this motif could have the same underlying significance — from Vitruvian Man to the European flag, to the 'person who wears a five-pointed star pendant' today.[731] McNamara seems to be taking the same approach that Lovett took — as criticised by Haddon — when he lined up crescent-shaped objects from around the world and assumed they all had the same significance.[732] He stretches each scrap of evidence to its limits, apparently taking literally Oakley's advice that 'we should not neglect any clues which may eventually illuminate' the 'prehistoric mind'.[733] Like Merrifield and the pre-war collectors in Chapter 6, McNamara makes it clear that he has been collecting this material out of personal interest for many years, alongside his main specialism in palaeontology. However, he appears to risk more speculation in its interpretation than he does in his primary scientific field.[734] Due to academic specialisation, theoretical approaches considered obsolete in one discipline can re-surface in another. Wintle writes that visitors to Toms' museum re-interpreted his displays in ways that he did not intend; it seems that his academic successors have done the same with his collections and his writing.

McNamara follows a familiar evolutionary line of reasoning, assuming that human thoughts on magical fossils and stones evolved from finding a stone that was good for practical purposes, to considering it lucky (magical), to imbuing it

[731] McNamara, *Star-crossed stone*.
[732] Haddon, '*Crescent Charms*'.
[733] Oakley, 'Folklore… Part I', 12.
[734] Archaeologists Margaret Murray and Herbert Thom are also widely known as having influenced popular ideas with speculative theories outside their main areas of expertise.

with 'spiritual' (religious) significance. In this, he seems to be following Tylor's scheme, as did Oakley and Bassett. He takes his cue from Blinkenberg in supporting the latter's idea that the 'thunderstone' belief is an echo of ancient beliefs in the god Thor.[735] While he claims that 'Toms found that there were scattered traces of the thunderstone belief still current in 1930', Toms himself was much more cautious in his interpretation of 'thunderstones', saying only that he found examples in Dorset and Wiltshire where people 'carry a small example in their pockets', perhaps to guard against lightning.[736] Toms admitted that despite the presence of such fossils in ancient graves, we do not know what they actually meant to ancient people, concluding only that in them 'we possess our earliest local evidence of some cult or custom indicative of religious belief'.[737]

The fossils and stones themselves in Toms' collection, if separated from his accompanying notes and photographs, reveal much less than later writers have ascribed to them. Antiquarians, folklorists and early anthropologists hoped to find 'survivals' of ancient pagan practices when they studied the folklore of local people. McNamara and others have hoped to come into contact with 'the prehistoric mind' by looking at the forms of ancient artefacts alone. McNamara, in particular, hopes that a specific visual form — the five-pointed star — will reveal itself to be of universal attraction to 'the human mind'. Looking again at Toms' collection and beyond, it seems as though curious objects of all kinds have a universal attraction, and that such 'charismatic' objects are credited with the power to assist people with their most difficult tasks and in times of trouble.[738]

[735] McNamara, *Star-crossed stone*, 153.
[736] McNamara, *Star-crossed stone*, 30; Toms, 'Shepherd's Crowns', 4.
[737] Toms, 'Shepherd's Crowns', 6.
[738] The concept of charismatic objects stems from Weber, *Economy and Society*, 401, and has been recently discussed by Wingfield in 'Touching the Buddha' and *Moving Objects*.

The specific powers invoked to assist in these endeavours — whether gods, spirits, ancestors or the agency of the objects or the people themselves — can differ between cultures and change over time.

7.8. Conclusion to Chapter 7

By refocusing our attention away from collecting and towards collections management and interpretation, this chapter has challenged the assumption that the mid-twentieth century decline in primary collecting was accompanied by a wider hiatus of interest in material magic. On the contrary, it shows that active engagement with, and analysis of, English amulets continued behind the scenes in museums throughout this period, and that much of this work was done by women. The chapter also examined the legacy of Herbert Toms, demonstrating that if we look beyond the horizons of anthropology and folklore, we find continual attention paid to this material by archaeologists, geologists and palaeontologists as well as historians. Material magic brokered relationships between ways of thinking and working encapsulated by the first and second folklore revivals.

CHAPTER 8. Science and secrecy in Boscastle

The thesis so far has contextualised the flood of material magic which inundated English museums during and following the first folk revival, and how those museums made sense of its aftermath. In the present chapter I argue that although England sought to redefine its boundaries and differentiate itself from the wider world after the Second World War, ideas incorporated into new conceptions of Englishness were inspired by material culture first encountered through colonialism, and by objects collected in the service of social evolutionism. Bell and Geismar have pointed out that in the mid-twentieth century, 'the strategic disavowal of objects as a prime focus of research removed anthropology from its legacy of colonial contact and museum collection, which was then subsumed by more popular culture'.[739] By the mid-twentieth century, the study of popular magic had fallen into the interstices between academic disciplines, and between subject-specialist and local museums. The presence of this absence is significant, setting free themes developed by folklorists and early anthropologists for non-academic interpretations. Academics materialised magic and then moved on, leaving a tideline of objects, collections and displays. Amateur enthusiasm in magic and its material manifestations continued, however, with interested individuals assessing the flotsam left by the storm. The present chapter focuses on the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic (MWM) in Boscastle, Cornwall, as a prime example of why and how English amulets gathered during the first folk revival were re-contextualised in the second by the museum's founders, the occultists Gerald Gardner and Cecil Williamson.

[739] Bell and Geismar, 'Materialising Oceania', 12.

Ronald Hutton explains that by the 1920s, the comparative method used by early anthropologists and folklorists had succumbed to the development of anthropology, archaeology and folklore as separate disciplines.[740] This is borne out by the life-stories or trajectories of English amulets collections, as the case studies in earlier chapters demonstrate. Rural 'folklife' was represented in new folk museums from the 1930s onwards, followed by urban working-class culture in new 'social history' museums from the 1950s, as explored in Chapter 7. Neither of these, however, recognised the importance of magic (or superstition, or the subconscious) in English popular culture. The MWM, with its focus on English magic, was paralleled by the purely secular vision of the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), which opened in the same year (1951). Early folklorists' and anthropologists' interest in evolutionary 'survivals' had been supplanted by a drive to salvage disappearing ways of life and to reclaim national, regional and local identities in an age of global homogenisation and great change. Whereas history, anthropology and archaeology became increasingly professionalised, there were (and still are) no equivalent English university departments or specialist museums for the discipline of folklore, which has largely remained an amateur — and as we have seen, often female — concern.[741]

Perspectives shed by academics after the first folk revival contributed to the formation of what Selberg terms 'alternative spiritualities' in the second, including Gardner's version of Wicca, which was in turn inspired by Margaret

[740] Hutton, *Moon*, 112.
[741] See Stocking, *After Tylor* on anthropology and Hutton, *Moon*, 387-393, on archaeology.

Murray's work.[742] In this new context, earlier books on magical subjects such as Paul Christian's *The History and Practice of Magic* (1870) and Elworthy's *The Evil Eye* (1895) were re-issued, in 1958 and 1969 respectively, but rebranded as 'occult'.[743] Aspirations towards modernity still prevailed in mid-twentieth century England however, and like earlier anthropologists, Gardner and Williamson suggested that elements of magic might have modern, rational, scientific explanations. We caught glimpses in earlier chapters of connections between museums and occultism in the century before Williamson opened his museum. But whereas Pitt-Rivers, Tylor and Toms — in an age when anything seemed scientifically possible — speculated on the scientific reality of spiritualism, divination, dowsing or a psychic force and made comparisons between these and the latest technological discoveries such as electricity and magnetism, Gardner and Williamson speculated on the rational scientific power of witchcraft and ritual magic. In the context of the Cold War, Gardner proposed that witchcraft could withstand nuclear weapons; Williamson suggested that 'when the power is fully understood its implications to the human race will be as startling as the development of Atomic power'.[744] Whereas earlier collectors had attended spiritualist meetings in the spirit of participant-observation, Gardner and Williamson took this trend further and became active participants in magical practice, blurring the line between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in their museums. Williamson used authentic English folk amulets as props in these endeavours.

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[742] The phrase 'alternative spiritualities' is taken from Selberg, ' Superstition', 302.
[743] P. Christian, (*aka* J. Baptiste-Pitois), edited and revised by R. Nichols (*aka* Nuinn), *The History and Practice of Magic* (New York: Citadel Press, 1969 [1870]); F. T. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye: The Origins and Practices of Superstition, with an introduction by L. S. Barron* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1958 [1895]).
[744] G. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today,* (New York: Citadel Press, 2004 [1954]), 15; MWM Archive Box 2, Item 53.

8.1. A closer look at the MWM

Apparently far removed from the urban intellectual centres of London and Oxbridge, the MWM has, since 1960, been based in the remote and ruggedly beautiful village of Boscastle, Cornwall. Taking the museum's displays, collections and archives as its starting point, this chapter considers how the MWM's roots are firmly planted in the academic folklore movement discussed in previous chapters, but also how Gardner and Williamson diverged from this trajectory. Despite their differences, both men were part of a wider movement to reclaim the occult within themselves, their audience and their own society, ironically using information and objects gathered by an earlier generation in pursuit of scientific and religious rationality. Despite the best efforts of scientific modernisers such as Haddon, museum collections made during the first folk revival have continued to inspire people with occult interests, from Annie Horniman to Cecil Williamson.[745] From the 1950s onwards, popular fascination with magic and witchcraft blossomed amid the second folk revival, as part of a broader counterculture which flourished after the Second World War (see *figure 8.1*). An examination of the MWM's English and international amulets attests to this cultural context, confirming that the seeds of the second folk revival were sown in the first.

[745] During the first folk revival, Annie Horniman (1860-1937) joined the occult organisation the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, together with the poet William Butler Yeats among others. The information here is taken from a paper presented by the historian and occult bookshop owner Christina Oakley Harrington at the Pagan Federation conference in Bude, Cornwall, 2014. Annie's father was John Frederick Horniman, founder of the Horniman Museum, and her family's museum can only have inspired her.

Both Gardner and Williamson were staunchly middle-class — they came from well-off Anglican families but neither had a university education and both spent their early adulthood working in British colonies, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) respectively. In this respect their backgrounds were comparable with Tylor's; he too was from a wealthy family, did not go to university, and travelled in South America and Mexico as a young man. The Oxbridge-educated natural scientists Balfour and Haddon, by contrast, had the opportunity to run museums at the core of the academic establishment from early in their lives. Collectors like Elworthy, Lovett and Clarke aspired to have their collections academically vindicated by established public museums. Gardner and Williamson, on the other hand, bypassed this system entirely by setting up their own. They blurred the boundaries between those who study and those who are studied by participating in what they claimed to be traditional witchcraft practices themselves. Far from trying to deny or explain away magic, Gardner and Williamson embraced it, created their own identities around it, and used it to publicise themselves and their privately owned museums.

The MWM revived a subject area that was conspicuously absent from both folklife and anthropology museums in the mid-twentieth century — that of witchcraft and magic, the irrational and supernatural. As a privately owned institution, it differed from most other museums holding English amulets in that its collection could be freely interpreted outside of the boundaries of academic propriety. However, the knowledge that it created and housed was not necessarily academically vindicated knowledge. For some people born into the post-war counterculture, embracing magic seemed to be a way of sweeping away

the restraints of the old religion, of focusing on individual agency instead of the repressive power of the Church. Earlier chapters touched on how audiences' interpretations conflicted with curators' intentions. At the MWM and its predecessors, such alternative viewpoints were embraced and exploited. The MWM, unlike national and university museums, was constrained by the need to make money by pleasing audiences. Although folk and ceremonial magic had long been entwined in practice, Williamson was the first to explicitly recombine their representation in museums. At the MWM 'high' and 'low', self-conscious and traditional, living and obsolete magical traditions were juxtaposed, while popular and academic conceptions of magic were combined. Williamson created a new context for English amulets including Lovett's, redefining them as evidence for 'traditional' witchcraft.

The museum's entire collection remains comparatively small, containing less than four thousand objects at the time of my survey in 2012.[746] In contrast to most larger and publicly funded museums, a relatively small proportion is in storage; almost everything is on show. The MWM contains not only historical objects of folk magic, but also ritual objects important to individuals and groups practicing forms of magic and witchcraft today and in the recent past, including artefacts created by Williamson himself. The Friends of the MWM's current recruitment leaflet claims that the museum contains 'the world's premier folk magic collection'. This may be the case for certain areas of its holdings — those relating to modern ceremonial magic — but although the MWM was the first, and

[746] At the time of my research visit, the latest record on the museum's database was number 2642. By July 2018, this had risen to 3786, probably largely due to backlog accessioning rather than new acquisitions.

remains the only, museum in England specifically dedicated to witchcraft and magic, it contains only the country's third largest collection of English amulets, with 275 identified by my 2012 survey.[747] Far from being unique, much of the MWM's folk magic material is similar to that in museums elsewhere in England. The differences lie in the museums' intentions and the ways in which their material is contextualised and interpreted.

Words, as well as things, can be said to have 'social lives', with their continuity of form masking their changing meanings, or with different words masking similar intentions. The MWM went through a number of incarnations before settling in Boscastle. The names that Williamson gave to his establishments present us with clues to his intentions and points of view, as they appear to use the terms 'folklore', 'witchcraft', 'superstition', 'sorcery' and 'magic' interchangeably. He first established a 'Witchcraft Research Centre' in Stratford-upon-Avon in the 1940s.[748] Significantly, this was around the time when many surviving members of an earlier generation of folklore collectors and anthropologists were finally passing away.[749] As we have seen, Ellen Ettlinger had already begun to enumerate and assess collections of amulets amassed during the first folk revival; by contrast, Williamson built on them in new ways. He moved his museum from Stratford to the Isle of Man in 1951, renaming it as 'The Folklore Centre of Superstition and Witchcraft', with its adjoining 'Witches Kitchen' restaurant. According to the anthropologist Amy Hale, Williamson 'may have

[747] The PRM has substantially more, while Clarke's Scarborough collection is marginally larger.
[748] MWM Archive Box 3, Item 150.
[749] Lovett died in 1933, Balfour in 1939, Haddon and the Toms in 1940, Frazer in 1941, Clarke in 1945 and Hildburgh in 1955.

purchased some of the artifacts from Gerald Gardner, founder of modern Wicca, who was also living on the Isle of Man at the time'.[750] The 1735 Witchcraft Act was repealed in the same year; the historian Joanne Pearson argues that for Gardner, the repeal 'signified that the time was ripe for the regeneration of Wicca'. According to Pearson, although the repeal attracted virtually no press attention, for those inspired by Gardner's books 'to establish covens and initiate witches', the repeal 'offered a chance for… a celebration of religious freedom'.[751] It must have provided an impetus for Williamson to create a sensation in public with his new museum, whilst providing a forum for him to challenge perspectives on witchcraft put forward by Gardner, latterly his arch-antagonist. The anthropologist Helen Cornish has noted that whereas Gardner was intent on promoting ritual witchcraft, Williamson was more interested in folk magic.[752] In the latter's opinion, the general public 'are only interested in certain aspects of witchcraft. They have no use for the complicated rituals and the clever stuff of the high-grade adepts'. [753]

Gardner and Williamson's relationship was ambivalent. Williamson later referred to Gardner rather disparagingly as an enthusiast who turned up at his Isle of Man museum and never left, taking up the role of 'resident witch'.[754] Hutton informs us that Gardner purchased the Isle of Man premises from

[750] A. Hale, 'The Land Near the Dark Cornish Sea: the development of Tintagel as a Celtic pilgrimage site', *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* (Vol. 2, 2004), 216.
[751] J. Pearson, 'Wicca, Paganism and history: contemporary witchcraft and the Lancashire witches', in R. Poole (ed.), *The Lancashire Witches* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 196-197.
[752] Cornish, 'Cunning Histories', 366.
[753] Williamson, cited in Godwin, *Museum*, 18.
[754] Williamson, cited in Godwin, *Museum*, 15.

Williamson in 1954, when the pair parted ways.[755] Gardner's book *Witchcraft Today*, published in the same year, prompted the Wiccan religion's popularity. Gardner referred to himself as 'Director' of the Isle of Man museum, which became an important medium through which he publicised his ideas.[756] As its Director he stated that 'the policy of the Museum is to show what people have believed in the past, and still do believe, about magic and witchcraft, and what they have done, and still do, as a result of these beliefs'.[757] Gardner acknowledged the presence of both 'high' and 'low' magic in his displays, reflecting his interpretation that 'ceremonial magic gave its rites a Christian form; whereas witches were pagans, and followed the Old Gods'.[758] Gardner and Williamson may have fallen out over this issue, but both seem to have had an ambivalent attitude to witchcraft, despite becoming famous as occult practitioners. Gardner declared that 'the Director would like to point out that he does not necessarily share these beliefs himself!'.[759] In *Witchcraft Today*, he presented himself as an impartial observer of contemporary Wiccan practices, only two years later claiming that he had been initiated into the religion. It is more difficult to know whether Williamson was fascinated or repelled by witchcraft, how seriously he took magic, or how he hoped that his audiences would respond. His 'show' appears to have been designed to bring out latent irrational tendencies in its visitors, which prompts us to question the status of the objects on show. Were they intended to be seen as curios, scientific specimens or 'live' magical objects?

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[755] R. Hutton, 'A Starting Point', in Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 163.
[756] Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 13.
[757] G. B. Gardner, *The Museum of Magic and Witchcraft: the story of the famous Witches Mill at Castletown, Isle of Man* (Tunbridge Wells: The Photochron Co., no date), 1.
[758] Gardner, *Museum*, 3.
[759] Gardner, *Museum*, 2.

Williamson subsequently relocated his museum to Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds then to Windsor (both popular tourist spots) in 1955, then to Looe in Cornwall.[760] In Windsor, the museum was called 'The Witchcraft Exhibition' but was also referred to as the 'Museum of Magic, Witchcraft and Superstition'. The Boscastle incarnation began life in 1960 as 'The Witches' House'. Here, Williamson set about (in his own words) 'assembling a collection of relics of witchcraft, magic and superstition such as exists nowhere else in Britain'.[761]

Initially the Boscastle 'attraction' (reports Hale) 'was one of several in Cornwall owned and operated by Williamson, including the Museum of Sorcery in Tintagel, which may have contained some of the collection now at Boscastle'. Apparently he 'was involved in a number of tourism enterprises, including the Museum of Smuggling, House of Cats, House of Shells, the Hangman's House and the Witches' House' as well as a 'House of Spells' in Polperro.[762] Clearly he intended to create a tourist attraction and probably used whichever word he thought would bring in most visitors, but we have also seen in previous chapters that such terms had been widely conflated by antiquarians, folklorists and anthropologists, collectors and curators in the past. Lovett, for example, changed his terminology to suit his intended audience, relating that he had planned to call his book 'The Folk-lore of London' until Dr H.S. Harrison of the Horniman suggested the more appealing — and at the time, more academically up-to-date

[760] See Godwin, *Museum*, 17.
[761] MWM Box 2, Item 53.
[762] The Museum of Smuggling is referred to in MWM Box 1, Folder 1, Item 83 and an uncatalogued envelope full 'smuggler's labels' handwritten by Williamson. The House of Shells was in Buckfast, South Devon: see C. H. Williamson and G. V. Williamson, *The House of Shells, Buckfast, Devon* (published by the authors, 1965). The MWM's online database contains references to Doreen Valiente's description of the exhibits at the 'House of Spells' (transcripts from Doreen Valiente's Diaries 1959-1966 in the museum's library (133.43 VAL, 29-34).

— title of 'Magic in Modern London'.[763] Williamson's museum finally transmuted into the Museum of Witchcraft, which he ran until his retirement in 1996, when he sold the establishment to recent the Pagan convert Graham King. On the latter's retirement in 2014, trusteeship of the collection passed to the artist Simon Costin's nascent Museum of British Folklore, at which time its name was changed to the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic; the concepts of 'folklore' and 'magic', but not 'superstition', were back in fashion.

Although the MWM's origins are not in Cornwall, its romantic Cornish setting is now key to its identity. For many visitors, the museum is a shrine and a place of pilgrimage, as described by a number of contributors to its fiftieth anniversary volume.[764] Hale notes that nearby Tintagel and Bossiney, together with Boscastle, 'create a geographical complex of sites' on the North Cornish coast and that 'the entire territory has been constructed by generations of holidaymakers as a sort of Celtic Otherworld; familiar yet exotic, and a place where you go for life changing transformation'.[765] More recently, the curator and historian Jason Semmens has looked at the twenty-first century emergence of 'Traditional Cornish Witchcraft' (TCW), arguing that it 'owes as much to the historical roots of Modern Pagan Witchcraft as it does the development of Celtic nationalism within Cornwall' (*figure 8.2*).[766] Indeed Gemma Gary, an enthusiastic proponent of TCW and supporter of the MWM, takes a great deal of information and inspiration from the MWM's collection and associated information provided by

[763] Lovett, *Magic*, 7.
[764] Godwin, *Museum*.
[765] Hale, 'Land', 207.
[766] J. Semmens, 'Bucca Redivivus: History, Folklore and the Construction of Ethnic Identity within Modern Pagan Witchcraft in Cornwall', *Cornish Studies* (Volume 18, Number 1, 2010), 141-161.

Williamson.[767] The museum, then, both benefits from and contributes to Cornwall's magical reputation.

Two key events have contributed to reshaping the MWM's collections and displays since Williamson's retirement. In 1996, Williamson retired and King took over as the museum's owner and curator. In 2004, its fame increased dramatically when a devastating flood hit the village, immersing the museum in several feet of muddy water and sweeping artefacts, archives and props out to sea. The flood acted as a catalyst for the museum, bringing instant fame, leading to offers of practical and financial help from around the world, to the formation of a Friends organisation which is still active today, and to increased global engagement with — and new interpretations of — the 'witchcraft' beliefs and practices which it purports to represent. People gathered together to recover objects, money was collected, and stories were assembled in a book of memories published to celebrate the museum's fiftieth anniversary.[768] As objects became outsiders (being liberated from their cases), people became insiders (of a community centring on the museum). Williamson himself said that 'a museum like a magnet draws to itself all manner of information on its subject. Far more than any researcher working on his own may ever hope to gather in the same time'.[769] His collection continues to participate in the process of collection, gathering to itself people and things, contributing to the formation of new relationships and new ideas. Like Moutu's *tsunami* in New Guinea, England's

[767] See for example G. Gary, *Silent as the Trees: Devonshire Witchcraft, Folklore and Magic* (London: Troy Books, 2011).
[768] K. Godwin (ed.), *The Museum of Witchcraft: a magical history: a collection of memories celebrating 60 years* (Boscastle: The Occult Art Company, 2011).
[769] Williamson, cited in Godwin, *Museum*, 18.

Victorian and Edwardian flood of collecting and the Boscastle flood both led to new cultural forms.[770]

8.2. Outsiders and insiders

The MWM and the objects within it allow visitors not just to acknowledge the historical existence of magic and witchcraft in English culture, but to aspire to practice them. It thus contrasts with earlier museum contextualisations of charms and amulets, which represented these objects as characteristic of unchristian or unscientific 'others'. The MWM has enabled people to feel a sense of community support as witches, magicians and Pagans, a sentiment strongly represented in the museum's anniversary volume. As one contributor put it, a childhood visit to the museum had confirmed to her that 'magic had existed and here was the proof'.[771] But belief is notoriously difficult to define and arguably impossible to measure.[772] Are 'Western' believers in magic, witchcraft or religion today practising some sort of doublethink or suspension of disbelief, or searching for lost innocence? Twenty-first century writing by and about believers and practitioners indicates that this is not always the case. Arizona, a 'born pagan' in the museum's anniversary volume and Sarah, 'a solitary witch' referred to in a paper by Cornish, explain how displays at the MWM have reinforced their convictions in the reality of magic and witchcraft respectively; similarly, the modern self-defined witches in Pearson's paper seem to hold their

[770] Moutu, 'Collection', 94-97.
[771] Arizona in Godwin, *Museum*, 112.
[772] See for example discussions in Henare *et. al.*, *Thinking,* 55; J. Goodare, L. Martin and J. Miller (eds.), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

beliefs with all seriousness.[773] This popular movement towards conscious irrationality and engagement with materiality is mirrored in academia, which can no longer claim that everyone either is rational or should aspire to rationality, or that the immaterial world is inherently superior to the physical world, or that some senses are superior to others.[774]

We have seen that earlier curators who promoted the scientific value of their museums, like Balfour, Haddon and Toms, denied or resisted re-interpretation by visitors of their didactic displays. Williamson, by contrast, embraced the potential of his museum and the objects within it to 'haunt' his visitors. Unlike the earlier scientific museums through which elements of its collections originated, the MWM — whilst making the most of people's desire to see museums as authoritative, rational, scientific institutions — deliberately encourages feelings of uncanny encounter. The mystique is intensified by the presence of objects which some people believe, or have believed, to have inherent power, and which are savoured by others through the temporary suspension of disbelief. The museologist Fiona Candlin argues that in addition to its emotive, remote location, the museum's 'magic' lies in the impression it gives,

[773] See Godwin, *Museum*; Cornish, 'Cunning Histories'; J. Pearson, 'Writing Witchcraft: the Historians' History, the Practitioners' Past', in J. Barry and O. Davies (eds.), *Witchcraft Historiography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 225-241.
[774] On rationality, I have consulted Larner, *Witchcraft*; Tambiah, *Magic*; Hutton, *Moon*; Meyer and Pels, *Magic*; Henare *et. al.*, *Thinking*; Waldron, *Sign*. Examples of studying the material world (in the form of museum collections) to advance knowledge include: Thomas, *Entangled Objects*; Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*; Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*; Douglas, *Material Culture*. On the senses see, for example, Edwards *et. al.*, *Sensible Objects*.

even to visitors who would not normally express a belief in witchcraft, that the magical objects inside are alive and 'working'.[775]

The Friends of the MWM, many of whom are self-defined witches and magicians, claim in their publicity leaflet that the museum is 'an important resource and safe repository for our heritage'. The leaflet's language takes an 'insider's' point of view rather than that of an academic or other 'outsider', offering visitors the opportunity to 'learn about witchcraft as a religion and as a way of life. See how it has developed through the ages and how it is still practiced today'. In this respect the museum is unique in the UK as a public collection, taking a stance outside academic orthodoxy that is more in line with the 'community centre' approach much admired by anthropologists working with museums in other parts of the world.[776] Today, mainstream museums aspire to allowing 'outsiders' to hold alternative interpretations of their collections. In practice, letting go of power over knowledge remains fraught with difficulties.

Academic attitudes to English magic and witchcraft have changed in the twenty-first century, alongside anthropological approaches to living traditions around the world. When Christina Larner wrote about modern witchcraft in 1984, and when Scarre and Callow wrote about early modern European witchcraft in 2001, they felt able to express straightforward disbelief and cynicism about modern magical thinking in a 'Western' context.[777] By contrast, more recent writing

[775] See F. Candlin, *Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
[776] See for example case studies in Peers and Brown, *Museums* and N. Stanley (ed.), *The Future of Indigenous Museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).
[777] Larner, *Witchcraft*; G. Scarre and J. Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-*

about the MWM, its collections and its founders tends to take one of two forms. Those who identify as witches or magicians, including contributors to its anniversary volume as well as Philip Heselton in his analysis of Gardner and Steve Patterson on Williamson, tend to assume the integrity of its collections and honesty on the part of Gardner and Williamson.[778] Recent academic interpretations (Hutton, Cornish, Candlin) maintain a studious detachment, taking care neither to identify as insiders or outsiders, nor to express a sweeping belief or disbelief in the powers of the objects displayed in the museum.[779] Peter Hewitt, who curated the museum after King's retirement, takes the matter-of-fact approach that Williamson was the creative practitioner of a living tradition.[780] Anthropologists, historians and museologists cluster around the MWM as an example of how they can now take seriously different 'worlds' and not just 'worldviews'.

As Gosden and Knowles have pointed out, new cultural forms are produced when cultures meet.[781] In the case of the MWM, these encompass not just beliefs and practices but the form of the museum and the objects themselves. Since the eras of Frazer and Haddon, and even since Larner's time, academics have moved towards the study of living and changing traditions, acknowledging that 'worlds' are constantly transformed as they encounter other 'worlds'. The changing significance of material magic provides an example of how cultures — from subcultures to world cultures — are mutually constituted. Nevertheless,

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Century Europe (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001 [1987]).
[778] P. Heselton, *Gardner*; Patterson, *Cecil Williamson*.
[779] Hutton, *Moon*; Cornish, 'Cunning Histories'; Candlin, *Micromuseology*.
[780] P. Hewitt, 'Collecting and fashioning magical objects with Cecil Williamson', *The Enquiring Eye* (No. 1, 2017), 46-60.
[781] Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*.

academics who aspire to take others seriously must also take themselves seriously. Geschiere's 2017 seminar on 'The Occult and Its Dilemmas' put this issue clearly, asking 'do we have to sacrifice academic clarity to grasp the power of the murky?'[782] The MWM exists at an interface between alternative worldviews, representing its subject matter as both self and other, as reflected in Williamson's ambivalent attitude towards magic and witchcraft.

8.3. The MWM: science or sideshow?

The MWM treads a fine line between two opposing models of museums — the fairground sideshow intended for entertainment and titillation, versus the ostensibly trustworthy, educational, scientific institution. Williamson took inspiration from both. 'Lower pleasures' as well as 'higher pleasures' were catered for in his museums. Curators of earlier anthropological museums with scientific aspirations, including Balfour, Haddon and Toms, made strenuous efforts to disassociate themselves with the former, allying themselves with the permanent and virtuous as opposed to the trivial, luxurious and ephemeral. Collectors like Elworthy, Lovett and Clarke struggled to identify themselves with science rather than curiosity (at least in public). Jude Hill and Claire Wintle have shown that audiences made their own interpretations of Lovett's and of Toms' collections, using them to reinforce their own preconceptions rather than being

[782] The University of Edinburgh, 'Peter Geschiere: "The Occult and Its Dilemmas: Do we have to sacrifice academic clarity to grasp the power of the murky?"', *www.iash.ed.ac.uk/event/%C2%A0peter-geschiere-occult-and-its-dilemmas-do-we-have-sacrifice-academic-clarity-grasp-power* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, updated 2019), accessed 3 Aug. 2018.

converted to their curators' scientific aspirations. Williamson seems to have played to those audiences, offering them more of what they expected to see.

When King took over as curator, he changed the displays subtly — and sometimes overtly — whilst retaining much of Williamson's content and layout. Archival photographs of Williamson's displays indicate that his presentation style was deliberately provocative.[783] A sign in the museum's window declared that 'this museum is devoted to the study of BLACK MAGIC and witchcraft'; the 'remains of Joan Wytte The Witch of Bodmin' were displayed salaciously, and visitors failing to leave a donation as they left were threatened with a curse. 'Dennis Wheatley style' tableaux depicted sexualised young female witches enacting some of the most lurid activities of which early modern witches were accused. Williamson evidently aimed to titillate and scare his visitors as well as educate them. As witchcraft grew in popularity as a modern religion, practitioners became concerned about how they were being represented.[784] Consistent with the museum's 'community centre' role, King undertook careful consultation with modern witches, magicians and Pagans. Sensationalist tableaux and human remains were removed. Such changes are in keeping with contemporary standards in museum display and professional ethics, as well as aiming to please not just those who identify as insiders but the broader visiting public. Although the museum now presents witchcraft in a more positive light, its more controversial aspects are not hidden — displays on *Satanism and Devil Worship* and *Cursing* have been retained.

[783] See MWM Photograph File 1. King commissioned photographs of the previous displays when he took over from Williamson.
[784] See Hutton, *Moon*, on the growth and definition of witchcraft as a religion.

Even today, it is difficult to know with what level of seriousness to approach the museum. A stage is set even before visitors enter the main display area. Outside the front door is a broom park, where one can park or buy a broom. Alongside the reception area is a pool dressed as a sacred spring where offerings may be made (or donations given), affording visitors an opportunity for deep emotional or spiritual participation. The spring has become surrounded by dedications to dead friends, adding to the impression that one is entering a space where magic is real or is really believed in, rather than a fairground sideshow. Sensory aids are deployed to enhance this impression — specially blended incense scents and purifies the museum each morning, while a soundtrack of ritual chanting by modern witches plays repeatedly. Arnold proposes that 'today's museums still promise a sort of "spiritual elevation", even if it is now understood more in terms of fantasises and journeys of the imagination'.[785] The artist Grayson Perry took this approach in his 2012 exhibition at the BM, *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman*, urging viewers to 'hold your beliefs lightly' and stating bluntly that 'some people call this irrational unconscious experience spirituality. I don't'.[786] The MWM is not just a theme park, a cabinet of curiosities, a scientific institution or a shrine — it is a combination of all of these. It was literally a place of pilgrimage for King, who sold his possessions and walked from his previous home in the south east of England when he became its curator. Nevertheless, Williamson himself referred to his museum as a 'show'. [787]

[785] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 255.
[786] G. Perry, *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* (London: British Museum, 2011), 91.
[787] This comment is made in an early 1950s notebook titled 'Bourton on the Water. The Troubles' (kept in an uncatalogued box of lists and notebooks in the MWM curator's office at the time of my visit in 2012) in which Williamson considers a range of practicalities relating to the success and failure of his various businesses.

8.4. Murray, witchcraft and folklore at the MWM

Today, the MWM presents visitors with almost every conception of witchcraft that one could hope to find, including the hag on a broomstick, the victim of the witch trials, the village wise-woman or cunning person, the Gypsy fortune teller, the high magician or occultist, and the modern Wiccan or Pagan. At the time of my 2012 visit, the museum's window display catered for a variety of tastes in witchcraft, with a model of a friendly black-clad witch, dried cats found concealed in walls, and the appropriate Sabbat from the Pagan wheel of the year. This mixed identity is reflected in the shop stock, from cheap souvenirs showing cats and broomsticks, to academic history books, to equipment for present-day self-defined magicians and witches. The visitor must follow a proscribed route through the building, encountering all of these definitions of witchcraft — supported by material exhibits — and imbibing their juxtapositions. The MWM thus gives the impression that modern witches are direct cultural descendants of those persecuted during the trials, that those people were persecuted for folk magic, and that the objects of 'low' and 'high' magic on display are both part of this living tradition. Through associating the witch trials, nineteenth century folk magic and twentieth century ritual magic within a small space, the museum conflates these different strands of history. The physical juxtaposition of objects in a museum setting is a powerful way to 'authenticate' this point of view.

The story of witchcraft told by the MWM today is firmly rooted in twentieth century thought. Like its exhibits, the museum's stored collections pertain to many of the ways in which witchcraft has been understood, from historical folk magic items, together with perhaps imagined replicas of these, to modern ceremonial equipment and regalia. Some artefacts in the museum's catalogue database list Williams, Gardner or the Wiccan occultist Alex Sanders as their 'creator'. The categories used in the catalogue reflect those used in the displays, from Curses through Protection to Working Tools. In 2012, when I undertook my survey, the first record on the database was a poppet described as a 'cloth doll in nurse's uniform with iron nail piercing womb area', classified under 'Curses'.[788] The 'original text by Williamson' is given as 'the case study of the pregnant nurse… 1941'. This disquieting object is chosen to exemplify living 'black magic' by several contributors to the museum's anniversary book.[789] More recent catalogue entries demonstrate the variety of material the museum continues to collect, and how it continues to reflect Williamson's combination of interests. The latest database record was for a 'witch figure' or 'plastic stereotypical hag', classified under 'Images of Witchcraft', while the penultimate record was a 'fox skull' described as 'part of a collection of magical objects used by the donor's father' and classified as 'Modern Witchcraft'.[790] Objects of nineteenth and twentieth century folk magic, together with representations of these, are subsumed into a story about witchcraft and magic that spans the whole of humanity's past, from prehistory until today. Whereas holed stones, for example, can be found amongst charms and amulets familiar in other museum collections,

[788] MWM 10.
[789] Godwin, *Museum*.
[790] MWM 42.

at the MWM they are presented not as obsolescent, superstitious 'survivals', but are staunchly appropriated as 'witchcraft', knowing, living, and often malevolent. A powerful catchphrase still used by the museum is 'and it still goes on today' (*figure 8.3*).

Pearson argues that 'it is important that a distinction is made between the history of witchcraft in early modern Europe, the history of modern witchcraft, and perceived connections between the two'.[791] At the MWM, however, comparisons are made across time, sometimes making spurious connections between 'witchcraft' and 'magic' in England's past and today. Historians of the early modern witch trials explain that 'popular' and 'elite' notions of witchcraft were very different, but that colonial encounters expanded English notions of what witchcraft could mean.[792] Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies explain that 'the popular religious beliefs of subjects in European territories sometimes seemed equally alien to "civilised" Christian elites as those overseas'.[793] Similarly, Christina Larner argues that within pre-industrial society 'the beliefs of the educated, though frequently different from those of the mass of the populace, were from our own [*sic*] point of view no less exotic'.[794] A recent display on 'Christian Magic', for example, incorporates Catholic artefacts such as votive offerings. Perhaps inadvertently, the museum has taken forward a centuries-old Protestant animosity against Catholics, which associated their practices with

[791] Pearson, 'Writing Witchcraft', 233.
[792] See for example Scarre and Callow, *Witchcraft*; Poole, *Lancashire Witches*; Barry and Davies, *Witchcraft*; Goodare *et. al.,* 'Witchcraft'.
[793] Barry and Davies, *Witchcraft*, 4.
[794] Larner, *Witchcraft*, 164.

paganism and magic and was inherited by folklorists like Lovett as well as by Williamson.

Both Gardner and Williamson traced their own interest in witchcraft back to meeting 'real witches'. The foregoing discussion complicates their claims. Williamson's personal story states that he witnessed an old woman being persecuted by youths as a witch in a Devon village when he was a boy. Gardner claimed to have been initiated by a Wiccan coven in the New Forest. The types of witches the two men professed to have encountered reflect the sorts of witchcraft in which they were interested. In many ways they mirror the long-standing and recurrent conceptual division between 'magic' and 'religion'; Gardner conceived of witchcraft as a religion and Williamson saw it as the practice of magic, both 'white' and 'black'.[795] Nevertheless, both men were clearly influenced by the outcomes of the first folk revival and reliant on the material remains of early anthropology. Williamson was inspired by other museums and acquired material originally collected by folklorists, although unlike Gardner he did not actively participate in the FLS or in wider academic circles. It is perhaps ironic that Gardner was involved in the FLS and Williamson was not, given that the latter's interest in folk magic was more akin to that of other Society members.

Margaret Murray's influential theories on witchcraft and paganism, developed in the early decades of the twentieth century, were significant for the MWM. Academic and popular conceptions of witchcraft were transformed by Murray's

[795] Hutton, *Witches, Druids*, 87.

books, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* and *The God of the Witches*, published in 1921 and 1931 respectively, as well as by Montague Summers's *The Discovery of Witches*, published in 1928.[796] Murray took inspiration from non-Western ways of life in creating her concept of the Western European 'witch-cult', comparing ancient European traditions with what she referred to as 'savage tribes' and 'primitive religion'.[797] She used evidence from witch trial records to argue that witches were members of an indigenous pagan fertility religion that had continued in secret since pre-Christian times.[798] Summers believed that witches were practitioners of Satanic rites. Both of these opinions are still reflected in the MWM's displays. In the 1950s Gardner, following Murray, compared elements of his Wiccan religion with African and Asian ritual practices.[799] Gardner's *Witchcraft Today* was published over 20 years after Murray's *Witch Cult*; Hutton comments that 'it took 25 years for Murray's theories to 'enter popular knowledge' and 'at least the same… for them to be widely rejected'.[800]

From the mid-twentieth century, collectors' interpretations of amulets indicate that popular interest in witchcraft grew, perhaps in the wake of Murray's theories. Murray herself, however, does not seem to have been particularly interested in the material culture of English magic, nor a profuse collector of

[796] Murray, *Witch Cult;* M. Murray, *The God of the Witches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931); M. Summers, *The Discovery of Witches: a study of Master Matthew Hopkins, commonly call'd Witch finder generall / by the Rev. Montague Summers, together with a reprint of The discovery of witches from the rare original of 1647* (London: The Cayme Press, 1928); see J. Wood, 'The Reality of Witch Cults Reasserted: fertility and satanism', in Barry and Davies (eds.), *Witchcraft Historiography*, 69-89.
[797] Murray, *Witch Cult*, 10, 177.
[798] See also Murray's obituarist E. O. James, 'Dr Margaret Murray', *Folklore* (Vol. 74, No. 4, Winter 1963), 569.
[799] Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*.
[800] Gardner, *Witchcraft*; M. Murray, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe: a study in anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), 10, 177; Hutton, *Moon*, 362.

witchcraft-related artefacts. At the PRM, just one relevant object is attributed to her — the 'glass flask reputed to contain a witch' from Sussex, accessioned in 1926.[801] The MAA holds a 'witch's broom' from Murray, accessioned in 1939 and probably collected in the local area.[802] She, and to a lesser extent Gardner, were both involved in the FLS and published in its journal. Murray served as the Society's President during the 1950s and gave her presidential address on *England as a Field for Folklore Research* in 1955. Her sole contribution to discussions of English magic in *Folklore* was her 1946 correspondence on the theme of wax and clay images used in malevolent magic. This topic seems to have particularly interested Williamson too, as there are several 'poppets' at the MWM. Earlier folklorists collected few specimens of malevolent folk magic from the British Isles: from Scotland the *corp chre* (clay bodies pierced with pins to harm an enemy), and from England animal hearts and onions stuck with pins to hurt witches, are rare examples in the PRM and MAA's collections.[803]

The FLS' influence on English occultism — and the voices of this new 'source community' — went unacknowledged by the FLS until Jacqueline Simpson's 1994 paper *Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her and Why?*, followed in 1995 by Simpson's review of a reprint of *An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present* by Gardner's protégé, the Wiccan priestess Doreen Valiente.[804] This development accords with the more recent academic approach of taking diverse voices 'seriously'. Moving full circle, *Folklore* has provided a conduit for reviving

[801] PRM 1926.6.1.
[802] MAA 1939.132.
[803] The *corp chre* are numbered MAA E.1895.138 and PRM 1889.40.1 respectively.
[804] J. Simpson, 'Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her and Why?', *Folklore* (Vol. 105, 1994) and '*An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present* by Doreen Valiente', *Folklore* (Vol. 106, 1995), 122, referring to D. Valiente, *An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present* (London: Hale, 1973).

discussions about material folklore and traditional magic, for re-assessing the occult and for taking English magic seriously. Simpson points out that 'we can either read sociological studies… or the writings of the witches themselves'. Her main criticism of Valiente is that she 'does not differentiate between items from old rural folklore (e.g. animal familiars, seasonal dates), those drawn from "high" magic (e.g. robes, pentacles), and mere hypothetical "reconstructions" (e.g. laying antlers and a corn dolly on one's altar to represent the God and the Goddess)'.[805] The same could be said of the MWM.

Whereas Murray thought that the witch cult had finally died out in the eighteenth century, however, Gardner was among those who built on her ideas by purporting that witchcraft had continued, as a secret underground religion, into the twentieth century.[806] Under Gardner's influence, witchcraft beliefs were transformed from a superstition to be derided, or a cult consigned the past, into a living tradition to which one could aspire to belong. Following Murray and Gardner's ideas, Williamson's displays used English amulets to illustrate the continuity of witchcraft over time. The MWM could not have been conceived without the collections of early antiquarians, folklorists and anthropologists or without Murray's theories. It was not until the 1960s that historians began to overturn these theories by demonstrating that her evidence had been partial.[807] As Pearson explains, it was then that 'modern Witches, Wiccans and Pagans had to come to terms with strong arguments against the survival of a pre-Christian

[805] Simpson, '*ABC*', 122.
[806] See Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*.
[807] See A. D. W. Macfarlane, 'Murray's Theory: Exposition and Comment', in M. Marwick, *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 201-203; Simpson, 'Margaret Murray', 89–96; C. Oates and J. Wood, *A Coven of Scholars: Margaret Murray and her working methods* (London: FLS Books, 1998).

religion indigenous to Britain and Europe'.[808] Cornish has shown that interpretations of witchcraft and its past by those who identify themselves as witches today are diverse and no longer routinely take historical continuity with those accused during the witch trials for granted.[809] At the time that Gardner and Williamson first created their museums, though, Murray's ideas were still widely accepted in academic circles.

Gardner was linked with the folklore networks discussed in previous chapters. Having studied living cultures whilst living and working in both England and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), he referred to himself as 'an anthropologist' and participated in international events on behalf of his museum, though his written contributions to *Folklore* were minimal.[810] In 1939 he wrote a brief report for the journal, entitled simply 'Witchcraft', about a box of objects in his possession credited to the seventeenth century witch-hunter Matthew Hopkins. According to the Wiccan researcher Philip Heselton, Gardner claimed to Williamson that Hildburgh envied the box.[811] Again, though, Gardner relied on Murray for his information: the historian Malcolm Gaskill says that Gardner 'owned a box of Hopkins' relics (authenticated by Murray), including a parchment talisman, a finger-bone, and a crucifix-topped staff. It was a palpable hoax…'.[812] It is not clear whether Gardner himself perpetrated the hoax, or whether he was taken in by it. Nevertheless, this incident demonstrates that he was part of broader collecting

[808] Pearson, 'Wicca', 189-199.
[809] Cornish, 'Cunning Histories'.
[810] Heselton, *Gardner,* 447-449, mentions Gardner's attendance of the International Congress of European and Western Ethnology, Stockholm, in 1951, at which he hoped to 'spread the News on the Continent' of his 'discovery' of witchcraft.
[811] Heselton, *Gardner,* 427-428.
[812] M. Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

networks, as well as indicating that he was aware of the value that other collectors ascribed to magical artefacts. A similar question hovers over Gardner's relationship to Wicca — was he taken in by an existing New Forest coven or did he invent it himself?[813] In 1942, Gardner contributed a paper to *Folklore* on 'British Charms, Amulets and Talismans', in which he differentiated between the three categories, at about the same time that Ettlinger began to re-evaluate these collections. Ettlinger's paper *British Amulets in London Museums* had been published just three years earlier. Gardner's familiarity with Lovett's material is demonstrated his comment that 'in the Horniman and Imperial [War] Museums are exhibited many charms that were carried by soldiers and sailors throughout the last war'.[814] Gardner's final contribution to *Folklore* was a brief exchange with Ettlinger on the subject of the hazel wand as a magical weapon in 1944-45.[815]

Williamson, too, was reliant on the first folklore movement and early anthropology for many of the objects in his collections, as well as some of his interpretations. Many of the objects displayed today are typical of charms and amulets in other museums. These include English holed stones, Mediterranean *cimaruta* and First World War soldiers' charms (*figures 8.4 and 8.6*). A fishing-net float with an inset coin resembles one accessioned by the MAA in 1920, both of which were obtained via Lovett (*figure 8.8*). In some sections of the MWM's displays we find many of the artefacts of popular or 'low' magic that had so

[813] This issue is fully discussed by Hutton (*Moon*), who concludes that no such coven existed.
[814] G. B. Gardner, 'British Charms, Amulets and Talismans', *Folklore* (Vol. 53, No. 2, Jun., 1942), 96.
[815] G. B. Gardner, *Folklore* (Vol. 55, No. 4, Dec. 1944), E. Ettlinger, 'The Hazel as a Weapon', *Folklore* (Vol. 56, No. 1, Mar., 1945), 228.

fascinated antiquarians, folklorists and early anthropologists. On a tour of the MWM, the visitor encounters examples of these in the 'Protection' and 'Curses' displays. A showcase on 'Spells and Charms' includes magical objects for safety at sea as well as amulets such as moles' feet to guard against cramp, which were sourced via Lovett. There are no didactic interpretive panels here, but every object has an individual label, many of which are marked 'text by Cecil Williamson', somewhat distancing the museum today from the information they contain. Many of the objects themselves are original in the sense of genuine; many of Williamson's interpretations were original in the sense of newly created. One of the objects on display, for example, appears to be a typical East African beaded pendant (*figure 8.9*). It may well be, as the label claims, a 'beaded spirit charm box'. However the text (said to have been written by Williamson) continues 'spirit boxes often contain swans' down, pubic hair or wool into which the spirit can snuggle up and get comfortable. This spirit's name is said to be "Fred" and was once the protector of Dora from St. Ives'. Unless Dora herself was of African heritage, either Dora or Williamson probably appropriated this African artefact and gave it new purpose and meaning, perhaps inspired by its original use.

Several notebooks in Williamson's archives contain lists of artefacts from previous iterations of his museum, allowing us to contextualise ways in which he understood the English objects he collected. One, labelled 'Cecil Williamson witchcraft notebook', contains his notes on spells, charms, amulets and divination, together with a long section on ancient Egypt, demonstrating that he shared many of his interests with earlier folklorists and antiquarians. A 'List of

exhibits on show at the Witches Kitchen. Castletown. Season 1953' refers to over a thousand objects including books, as well as items of English and Italian folk magic familiar from collections like those of Lovett and Elworthy.[816] These include soldiers' charms, holed stones and *cimaruta*, as well as international material such as African 'witch doctor's' equipment and a greenstone Maori *tiki* charm.[817] In addition to the familiar English and international folk magic material found in other collections, however, contemporary English occult material is also listed, and in this respect Williamson's collection is unique in museums.

The only familiar collector who can be clearly identified as having contributed to the MWM is the ubiquitous Lovett, who spread his collections as widely as he could amongst museums. Williamson moved back to London from Africa in 1930, three years before Lovett died in 1933, so the two men could have met. There is no correspondence from Lovett in the museum's archives, but a long list of material from England, Europe and the wider world titled 'all from Edward Lovett' is recorded in Williamson's notebook "Witchcraft Data Field Notes'.[818] The MWM's range of unprovenanced objects not on display — including trade charms, knuckle bones for gaming, and First World War soldiers' charms — reflects Lovett's published interests so closely, as well as mirroring his collections elsewhere, that it would be remarkable if much of this material was not his. Several old labels in the (uncatalogued) archives provide direct evidence

[816] This is stored in an uncatalogued MWM box labelled 'C Williamson Lists & Inventories'.
[817] The term 'witch doctor' is quoted from Williamson but is now considered inappropriate; the catch-all phrase 'ritual practitioner' is often used when the local indigenous term is not known.
[818] This is stored in an uncatalogued, undated MWM box file labelled marked 'card index unfiled including notebook 777 plus others'.

that some of the MWM's collections came from Lovett.[819] One such label, for example, says 'Witches [*sic*] charms. Purchased from the E. Lovett collection… Mr Lovett's notes state that these charms were used in all her spells and cures' (*figure 8.10*). This label indicates that Williamson sometimes transferred Lovett's comments straight onto his labels, as did Clarke of Scarborough. Another old label refers to 'twenty moles paws from the E. Lovett collection' that are still on display (minus two which were lost in the 2004 flood) (*figure 8.11*). The label continues: 'These were used by the wise-woman (some would call her a witch) Widow Morley of Atcham near Shrewsbury …'. Both of these labels demonstrate that in contrast to his anthropological predecessors, Williamson was keen to find examples of 'witchcraft' rather than 'magic', of 'witches' rather than cunning-folk or charmers.

It is possibile that Williamson also obtained objects previously owned by Elworthy. In his 'Witchcraft Data' notebook, Williamson comments in relation to the Taunton Museum, 'Curator. Mr Sansome. Might get some of the Ellsworthy [*sic*] Collection'. Sansome was responsible for transferring most of Elworthy's collection to the PRM 1968, so it would not be surprising if he had also handed over some of the material to Williamson.[820] The MWM contains many objects typical of Elworthy's collection, such as Italian charms made of silver and coral, and those with imagery of hands, horns and the evil eye. We know that Williamson visited the Taunton museum and had a copy of *The Evil Eye* in his

[819] These are stored in uncatalogued MWM archive boxes.
[820] A careful comparison of Taunton's accession registers and Elworthy's catalogue (now at the PRM) with objects at Boscastle could confirm this.

library.[821] Undated notes by Williamson make use of this book, mentioning 'these charms called Sirene, or *Cavalli Marini* by Neapolitans...' and 'Diana Triformis, the triple Diana…', noting that they are 'to be added at end of paper on Evil Eye'.[822] Williamson links the evil eye with 'the Arms of the Isle of Man, which is thus descended from a protective Amulet…' and his collection contains two triskelion brooches.[823] This Isle of Man emblem is Williamson's own addition to the repertoire of symbols which can be associated with the evil eye, but it demonstrates the extent to which Elworthy's objects and his associated ideas — alongside those of other early folklorists and anthropologists — influenced Williamson's collecting practices.

In addition to the objects themselves, archival references demonstrate that Williamson visited many museums with ethnographic collections, so could have been influenced by them.[824] Although only a small proportion of the MWM's collection is provenanced, it is clear that Williamson did a great deal of research in the form museum visits and reading. His archive contains boxes of handwritten notes giving standard information about various forms of amulets, of which the familiar fossilised sea urchins or 'Fairey Loaves' are just one example (*figure 8.12)*. At the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Exeter he

[821] The original contents of Williamson's library would make a study in themselves. The MWM's archives contain several lists of books, from which some of his sources can be inferred.
[822] MWM archive box 1, Folder 1, Item 60. I have been unable to identify this paper.
[823] MWM 2272-3.
[824] See Williamson's notebook labelled 'witchcraft data / field-notes / also shellcraft works'. This is stored in a MWM box file marked 'card index unfiled including notebook 777 plus others', together with a folder marked 'Card index & 777' and another marked 'C Williamson Lists & Inventories'. The notebook appears to have been written *circa* 1958, a date mentioned on one of its pages.

notes a Congolese Bakongo 'witchdoctors charm' (*nkisi*).[825] Congolese culture embodied early anthroplogical ideas of 'fetishism' and although these notions were superseded in academia, such material has retained its fascination for people interested in magic and witchcraft.[826] At Torquay, Williamson mentions a 'magical doll used as fetish', pilgrims' shells, the 'Laycock collection of bygones' and 'witch doctor's equipment' amongst other objects from around the world; at Helston he noticed 'black ox horns', perhaps with Elworthy's theories in mind.[827] Another of Williamson's notebooks (on the theme of torture, rooted in his interest in the witch trials) contains references to 'bones as curios' including those at the Wellcome Museum.[828] An uncatalogued index card indicates that he visited the Ashmolean and notes his interest in Tibetan artefacts made from human skulls, a Turkish jet hand used against witchcraft and '2 manacles from original collection Tradescant', among other items.[829] Perhaps surprisingly, there is no indication that he visited the PRM, but he was clearly familiar with ways in which other museums presented their collections, so he would have been well equipped to give his own institution the character of an 'authentic' museum.

8.5. English magic in an international context

Williamson was clearly familiar with international ethnographic collections. As we have seen, English folk magic was first represented by early anthropological

[825] See notebook MWM *777: Witchcraft Data Field Notes.*
[826] See Cadbury, 'Trader'.
[827] Museums in Taunton, Truro, Wells, Polperro, Tewkesbury and Warwick are also mentioned in notebook MWM *777*.
[828] This unnumbered document is stored with Williamson's other notebooks and lists in the MWM archive.
[829] This is stored in an MWM archive box labelled 'card index unfiled'.

museums in the context of material amassed by colonial-era collectors. English amulets were nested within collections of British, European and worldwide 'superstitions' or 'magic' as examples of what collectors perceived to be 'primitive survivals' in a 'civilised' society. The MWM today seems different, with its focus firmly on England, but as Clayton has observed in relation to English music, 'the significance of Empire often appears to have been so thoroughly naturalised as to be unremarked'.[830] Although Williamson's museum was the first to foreground English magic in a primarily national context, it reflected a more widespread cultural desire to identify primordial traits within modern Europeans, inverting the prevailing push for 'progress'. As explored in Chapter 3, this tendency in modernity was already evident in the work of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century 'primitivist' artists and in the works of Sigmund Freud. To some extent, the MWM incorporated imagery inspired by what was then known as 'primitive art', made by the indigenous peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania but encountered by Europeans in colonial settings. In a sense, Williamson's displays conflated anthropology and primitivism, balancing 'science' with 'poetics' by providing an environment in which, to use James Clifford's words, 'others appeared now as serious human alternatives' and 'modern cultural relativism became possible'.[831] Clifford commented in 1981, however, that 'the problems associated with a humanist vision have lately become all too apparent. Third world [*sic*] voices now call into question the right of any local intellectual tradition to construct a museum of mankind'.[832] Tensions continue today between inter-cultural appreciation and appropriation, based on

[830] Clayton, *Musical renaissance*, 2,
[831] MacClancy, 'Brief Encounter'; Clifford, *Ethnographic Surrealism*, 542
[832] Clifford, *Ethnographic Surrealism,* 562.

inequalities of power and privilege. The MWM today focuses almost exclusively on English material, as attested by its incorporation into the Museum of British Folklore. Its displays do not acknowledge the colonial context and global entanglements in which its versions of England and Englishness have been constructed. Such efforts to separate the local from the global can be construed as an attempt at 'purification' and denial of 'hybridisation' of world cultures, to use Latour's terminology.

Williamson's own interests, however, were more international than is evident by looking at the MWM's displays today. As a young man in the 1920s, he lived and worked in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and was impressed by the indigenous witchcraft and magic he encountered there. In earlier iterations of his museum, Williamson made explicit comparisons between English and African witchcraft. His old display labels and notebooks contain many references to international objects, in particular Kenyan *Mau Mau* material and a few Pacific artefacts, although the objects themselves are no longer in the museum's collections. His coverage, however, was sensationalist. He focused on witchcraft among the Kikuyu people of Kenya during their anti-colonial uprising in the 1950s, relishing the secrecy of African witchcraft and his own first-hand knowledge of its rituals and practices.[833] Williamson's photographs of African power objects are accompanied by his comments on the secretive nature of African witchcraft in this colonial context, for example his statement that '…the threat of white

[833] MWM Archive Box 39, MS 6067. Katherine Luongo has recently examined this issue in *Witchcraft and Colonial Rule in Kenya, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). The 'Mau Mau Rebellion' became news again in 2012 as the UK government finally accepted that colonial forces had used torture against its participants, which was seen by Williamson as echoing the early modern European witch trials.

persecution has driven witchcraft underground, so we find that among the native races, the secret fires of witchcraft smoulder dangerously'.[834]

Williamson's interests in Congolese 'fetishes' and African witchcraft were shared by other travellers including missionaries.[835] Like Haddon, he purchased artefacts from missionaries, who used them to publicise their cause and sold them to fundraise for their endeavours.[836] He planned to display a replica African 'witchdoctor's hut', and referring to an 'African witchdoctor's shrine' (perhaps the same 'hut'), he savoured its gruesome aspects, noting its 'purpose to work vengeance magic. The suspended skull drips a foul concoction onto the skull below'.[837] Perhaps this emphasis reflected ways in which the missionaries themselves, in this case the Church Missionary Society (CMS), represented the shrine in their efforts to discredit African beliefs and practices in their promotion of Christianity. Williamson's imagination was clearly fired by the sort of objects which have often been sensationalised and misinterpreted, including a 'beheader's knife', artefacts made from human bones, and a 'man-trap' from New Guinea.[838] Working outside of academic orthodoxy, his attitudes were less akin to those of earlier curators and more like those of their audiences. Judging by Hill

[834] Note in MWM Photograph File 2.
[835] On Congolese 'fetishism' see, for example, M. Kingsley, 'The Fetish View of the Human Soul', *Folk-Lore* (Vol. 8, No. 2, June 1897); R. E. Dennett, *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind: or Notes on the Kingly Office in West Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1906). On African witchcraft, see Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*.
[836] MWM MS 6041.
[837] This comment was found in an un-numbered exercise book in the MWM's archives in 2012.
[838] See note in MWM Photograph File 2. References to these artefacts can be found in Williamson's 'Witchcraft Data Field Notes' notebook, stored in an MWM uncatalogued box file labelled marked 'card index unfiled including notebook 777 plus others'. O'Hanlon in 'Mostly Harmless?' has argued that the latter artefacts, once viewed by collectors as archetypical symbols of savagery, may have been produced specifically for Europeans in search of 'cannibals'. Williamson's archives refer to museum displays, but missionary displays are not mentioned.

and Wintle's analyses of public perceptions of anthropology museums, his public would have appreciated this approach.

Ronald Hutton has posed the question of why the notion of pagan survivals was so popular after it had collapsed within academia, concluding that 'the familiar rituals of the British countryside were integrally linked with savage and foreign rites in an exciting and unsettling way'.[839] The popularity of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, he posits, was due to 'not so much an enhanced respect for rationalism and progress as a delight in the primitive and unreasonable'.[840] The MWM reflects this recurring theme within modernity; despite attempts to separate the rational from the irrational, magic from science, and education from entertainment, irrepressible currents of interest in magic resurface and bubble up outside of, and in response to, mainstream culture.

Williamson acquired objects which had been field-collected by antiquarians, folklorists and anthropologists during the first folk revival. His early collection contained a cross-section of European and international material more typical of early ethnographic museums, but their re-contextualisation reflected the emphases of the second revival. Like the collectors introduced in previous chapters, he was inspired by a combination of world cultures, Classical Europe and the English past. For example, a Torres Strait stone, likely to have passed through Haddon's hands, re-appeared in Williamson's museum re-contextualised

[839] Hutton in *Moon*, 113, credits this idea to the Classicist Mary Beard.
[840] Hutton, *Moon*, 117.

as an artefact of 'witchcraft'.[841] The stone can no longer be found in the museum's collection but an old label describes it as a 'Love charm. A white water worn pebble from the Torres Straits Tasmania where these pebbles are highly prized and preserved as love charms. From the E. Lovett collection' (*figure 8.5*). This pebble alone potentially links Williamson into early-twentieth century networks of exchange involving anthropologists, folklorists and curators. Lovett could have obtained the charm directly from Haddon himself, or through exchange with another museum.[842] It is not clear whether the obvious geographical error is Williamson's or Lovett's, but such a mistake would not be out of character for either.[843] This careless provenance was nothing new in museums. Anthony Shelton has reflected on how the broad category of 'pagan', applied by seventeenth century collectors to the people and customs of the New World, the Classical world and 'barbarian' Europe, was reflected in the inaccurate provenances afforded to these objects.[844] Comparison with Williamson's attitudes to international material can offer some insight into the level of reliability we can expect from his English material.

8.6. Impressions of authenticity

[841] Herle highlights Haddon's 'fascination with charms or *zogos'* from the Torres Strait in 'Life-histories', 79. See A. C. Haddon, 'Arts and Crafts', in Haddon *et. al.*, *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 6 vols., 1901-1935), (Vol. 4, 1912).
[842] Lovett is known to have obtained Oceanic material from the Liverpool Museum (now WML) in exchange for fire-making 'survivals' and trade-charms; see Marion Wood (then Assistant Keeper at the Horniman Museum), in a letter to Andrew West at the Merseyside County Museum (now WML), 2nd Mar. 1981, Horniman Museum archive. The Liverpool Museum, in turn, obtained material from Tylor's collection in the MoS after the Second World War.
[843] Haddon 'Crescent Charms', 103. Haddon pointed out that Lovett had misidentified a Solomon Islands artefact as coming from New Guinea.
[844] Shelton, 'Cabinets', 201.

Helen Cornish has pointed out that 'there is some concern over the authenticity of some of the artefacts displayed, and the credibility of Williamson's claims to the provenance of some objects' in the MWM.[845] To contextualise this claim, I consider different ways in which museum objects have been considered 'authentic', question the extent to which artefacts at the MWM live up to these standards, and differentiate between areas of the collection in terms of their relative 'authenticity'. What happens when the curator is not just an 'objective' impartial observer but also a magical practitioner? Where does creativity end and deception begin? What were Williamson's intentions and how have visitors responded to them?

Focusing in particular on the representation of cunning folk in the museum, Cornish examines ways in which they 'are incorporated into current witchcraft historiographies from a source for legitimacy and practice in the present, to a misrepresentative and fake history'.[846] For example, the museum contains portrait photographs of known nineteenth and twentieth century magical practitioners such as Granny Boswell and George Pickingill. Their personal presence enhances the impression that witchcraft is both an ancient and a living tradition. Owen Davies, however, has demonstrated that Pickingill and others were known in England as 'cunning-folk' rather than a witches, while Hutton's term 'service magicians' refers to such practitioners around the world, permitting us to limit the concept of 'witch' historically to those accused of

[845] Cornish, 'Cunning Histories', 366.
[846] Cornish, 'Cunning Histories', 372.

malevolent magic.[847] My survey suggests that the magic of most amulets was self-administered, for curing ills or preventing misfortune, neither used for malevolent witchcraft nor requiring the assistance of a 'service magician'.

Not all concealment is negative — there may be ethical reasons for not revealing something, such as modesty or shame, privacy, safety, or associations that one would prefer to forget; perhaps some things are unknowable, or not worth knowing. These reasons can sometimes override the 'rational' scientific impulse to leave no illusion unshattered. Turning to English amulets themselves, their original makers and users relied on them to reveal the unseen (the identities of thieves, witches and future lovers, for example) and to control others (to prevent witches from causing sickness or to make someone fall in love). The forgotten, hidden or secret aspect of magic attracted both Gardner and Williamson, enabling them to choose their truths, or to create new 'truths' and persuade others of their veracity. For Gardner, the ostensibly secret nature of witchcraft meant that he was able to 'reveal' to the world elements of Wicca which were later shown to be his own inventions.[848] Similarly, Williamson could display magical facts and artefacts that he had created whilst implying that they were folk traditions, or that his practices were part of a living folk tradition.

The line between replica and fake is a fine but significant one. The curator and museologist Hugh Cheape, in his study of magical objects in Scottish museums, has assessed how even in erudite circles the 'reputation' of magical objects

[847] Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 193-194; Hutton, *Witch*, xi.
[848] See Hutton, *Moon*.

collected by antiquaries 'grew over time'.[849] Thus, in the eyes of some collectors and writers, every stone with a hole in it becomes a 'hag stone' and every belemnite guards against lightning, whether or not the individual object in question was actually used for that purpose.[850] According to Arnold 'we implicitly trust museums… to expend considerable effort in finding out and telling us the truth about their contents'.[851] Citing the example of Freud's couch in the Freud Museum, London, Arnold says that 'if we subsequently discover that in fact what we saw was merely a replica, our disappointment can be profound'.[852] Classen and Howes attest that 'most museum-goers' prefer to encounter original artefacts rather than replicas (even those that are virtually indistinguishable from the real thing) because they are interested 'in establishing a connection with those artifacts and with the people who created them'.[853] They lyricise that 'by touching a collected object the hand of the visitor also encounters the traces of the hand of the object's creator and former owner. One seems to feel what others have felt and bodies seem to be linked to bodies through the medium of the materiality of the object they have shared'.[854] Notwithstanding, the incorporation of facsimiles and replicas has been standard curatorial practice in the creation of scientific collections, with these only distinguished from fakes and hoaxes through the clarity and honesty with which they are presented as such.

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[849] H. Cheape, 'Charms against Witchcraft: Magic and Mischief in Museum Collections', in Goodare *et. al.,* 228.
[850] A belemnite is a fossilised prehistoric sea-creature; these were widely believed to be 'thunderbolts'.
[851] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 93.
[852] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 93.
[853] C. Classen and D. Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artefacts', in Edwards *et. al., Sensible Objects*, 217. This concern is not new; Ovenell in *Ashmolean*, 244, noted that in 1881 the Ashmolean Museum drew criticism because 'inferior objects, such as casts, were exhibited while originals were put away in drawers'.
[854] Classen and Howes, 'Sensescape', 202.

What is absent from the MWM, however, is any systematic documentation of how, when and from whom Williamson obtained his collections and their associated information. Those moments of encounter between the collector and his sources are missing. There is no accession register or other systematic record of acquisitions, such as one would expect to find in an accredited museum. This makes the authentication of his collections difficult.[855] Just as antiquarians and folklorists like Clarke of Scarborough had done before him, Williamson assiduously collated references to particular sorts of artefacts in both ancient and modern literature. However, the literature he drew on is difficult to untangle because he rarely referenced his work. The extent to which he embroidered this information then becomes difficult to determine. Balfour spoke of the necessity for 'spinners' and 'weavers' in research — that is, those who collect data versus those who analyse and generate theory from it. Williamson was a spinner of tales in a different sense. Old object labels in his archive range from the factual to the implausible. Take, for example, two labels referring to charms against warts. One of these sounds like typical folk magic while the other contains a level of detail about associated beliefs and practices which have not been preserved in any other English collection (*figure 8.13 a-b*). Similarly, in previous chapters we have encountered a variety of ways of interpreting holed stones. Williamson's label is strikingly different, saying that the stone was used in 'weather-making magic'

[855] The MWM's collections of objects, archives and books continue to grow, hence it can be difficult to differentiate Williamson's original material from later additions. Archival material which can be identified as his own includes albums of old photographs, drawers of index cards, boxes of typed old display labels and handwritten drafts of these, notebooks, notes and lists, through which the growth of the collection can, to some extent, be pieced together.

and describing how it was used in practice (see *figure 8.6*). Williamson's instructions sound as though he tried out — or created — the method himself.

The MWM contains, in addition to the amulets and soldiers' charms familiar from other institutions, at least a dozen supposed charms and amulets that are unlike those found anywhere else. Five of these are said to be love charms, five for protection, one against witchcraft and one against miscarriage. Four of the love charms are made of composite materials incorporating ladies' nylon stockings, while one is attributed to a 'sea witch'. It is possible that these represent a later form of charm or amulet, or one overlooked by earlier collectors, or a tradition recently arrived in Devon from elsewhere in the world, but perhaps they simply reflect Williamson's own preoccupations. He applied the term 'witchcraft' to objects and activities that earlier collectors had interpreted as 'survivals', 'superstitions' or 'magic'. For example, a 'hammer of Thor' sheep bone is said to have been used by a 'Cornish sea witch', whereas Thor's hammers at other institutions are recorded as having been used by fishermen, fish workers and sailors against drowning.[856] This discrepancy displays Williamson's tendency to refer to all practitioners of magic as 'witches'. My survey indicates that traditionally, magical objects were more often intended to guard against witchcraft rather than perpetrate it.

As noted, although there are many authentic English amulets at the MWM, no other museum has consistently represented modern ceremonial magic and occultism as well as folk magic (see *figure 8.3*). For early anthropologists and

[856] MoW 238.

folklorists, these subjects were not seen as 'primitive' enough to be of interest. For post-war curators of folklife and later, social history, they were too close to the curiosity cabinet or the fairground sideshow, too closely associated with 'occultism or fantasy fiction' as Merrifield put it.[857] With no direct comparators in other museum collections, many of Williamson's artefacts are difficult to authenticate. A document in the MWM's archive depicts room layouts for both his Castletown and Bourton-on-the-Water venues, including a 'Black Magician's Room' incorporating a 'vast amount of ritual bibs and bobs', confirming that Williamson used props to create his effects as well as 'authentic' artefacts.[858] He also borrowed ritual regalia from existing covens and other occult contacts, as demonstrated for example by a 'list of articles on loan from the Southern Coven of British Witches and now returned'.[859]

When one tours the MWM as a visitor today, ritual or 'high' magic makes its first appearance on the first floor with a Rosicrucian rosy cross. Modern conceptions of witchcraft and magic are then broached, with a patchwork of displays on the Knights Templar, Satanism and Devil worship, the modern Pagan Green Man and the Wiccan Goddess and Horned God. These are followed by displays on key figures in twentieth century occultism including Austin Orsman Spare and Aleister Crowley. The final room, 'Modern Witchcraft', returns to twentieth and twenty-first century ceremonial material, much of it donated or bequeathed by recent users, some of it having belonged to famous practitioners including

[857] Merrifield, *Archaeology*, xiii.
[858] Stored in uncatalogued MWM box labelled 'C Williamson Lists & Inventories'.
[859] MWM archive Box 1, Folder 1, Item 4. This document is dated July 31st 1953 and signed by 'Cecil H. Williamson The Witches Kitchen'.

Gardner. In 2012, more than thirty artefacts from Gardner's collection were re-acquired by and redisplayed at the MWM (*figure 8.4*). The material is said to have been on show at Gardner's Witches Mill on the Isle of Man before being sold to an American buyer and subsequently displayed in *Ripley's Believe it or Not*.[860] The artefacts bear a strong resemblance to material amassed by earlier collectors including Lovett (a miniature soapstone shoe and representations of acorns), Elworthy, Hildburgh and Günther (coral *cornetto* charms, crescent moons and beads against the evil eye).[861] These earlier collectors of charms and amulets had used them as foils to emphasise their own rationality (Lovett) and Christianity (Elworthy), yet always with a hint of fascination at the beliefs and practices they found among their neighbours.

It is difficult to say whether Gardner obtained his material via previous collectors or acquired it himself 'in the field', but he and Williamson were the first to claim magical traditions as their own, in a museum context. Twentieth century occultists combined historical traditions of witchcraft with elements of their own invention.[862] Williamson took a similar path in relation to folk magic, blending folk traditions with occultism, fact and fabrication in his collections themselves as well as his interpretation of them. Most of his notes on objects and magical practices are unreferenced, but his enthusiasm for visiting museums and gathering information from standard and obscure works on folklore suggest that he tried to make his museum accurate by providing the best information that

[860] Ripley's is a collection-based American entertainment franchise. With its roots in 'Ripley's Odditorium' at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and its emphasis firmly on the 'bizarre', professional museums tend to regard Ripley's as their antithesis.
[861] MWM 2522-2556.
[862] Hutton, *Moon*.

was available to him on those subjects.[863] There is a qualitative leap, however, from his notes and index cards to the labels he displayed in public.

Curators like Haddon and Merrifield thirsted for more material evidence of English magic. Williamson appeared to find it. In addition to authentic items of folk magic and genuine artefacts of modern occultism, his museum contains unique artefacts with no equivalents found in any other public collection. These include items that Williamson claimed were obtained from genuine 'witches' but for which (as for the deliberately concealed objects discussed in Chapter 7) there appears to be no corroborating evidence.[864] Most questionable are the artefacts that Williamson claims to have obtained from living contemporary witches. These are in stark contrast to the artefacts collected during the first folk revival. A publicity poster for the MWM urges potential visitors to 'come drink from the cup of forbidden knowledge…', but the knowledge provided by Williamson to slake this thirst is questionable, partly because of the secrecy traditionally surrounding magic and witchcraft. If these things are genuine, it seems that no other researchers were recording them.

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[863] For example, an exercise book in a box of uncatalogued notes and labels lists occult classics which he must have used as reference works. These include C. J. S. Thompson, *Mysteries and Secrets of Magic* (London: J. Lane the Bodley Head, 1927) and Summers, *Discovery*. An uncatalogued indexed notebook labelled 'books' and 'code' lists topics of interest from 'abracadabra' to 'zodiac'. Unusually, it gives references with page numbers for the following works: E. Villiers, *The Mascot Book.* (London: T. Werner Laurie,); G. H. Bratley, *The Power of Gems and Charms* (London: Gay and Bird, 1907); E. Radford and M. Augusta, *Encyclopaedia of Superstitions* (London: Hutchison, 1948); M. Leach and J. Fried, *Standard Dictionary of Folklore* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1949). In the MWM notebook that lists Lovett artefacts (discussed above) we find a three-page list of books dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, from Picart in the 1730s to Catlin in the 1840s, confirming Williamson's interest in international magic: B. Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World* (London: Claude du Bosc, 1735-1739); G. Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians* (London: George Catlin, 1844).

[864] I have searched the indexed papers in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* and the *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, but it remains possible that there are further references in notes or correspondence sections of these journals, the societies' newsletters, local newspapers, or unpublished archives outside of the MWM.

There is no doubt that Williamson deliberately misled visitors about some of the artefacts he displayed. Notably, Hutton has uncovered Williamson's misappropriation and re-interpretation of artefacts from Snowshill Manor, to which Williamson's Bourton-on-the-Water museum was near.[865] In other areas of the collection, the line between fact and fiction is less clear-cut. Williamson is known to have created his own artefacts inspired by folk traditions in the process of experimenting with magical practice.[866] He openly made 'effective poppets for people using all the correct ingredients' and sent them out to clients by post.[867] However, it is possible that he also created things which he passed off as the work of others, some of which may be on show in the MWM's 'Protection' and 'Curses' displays. One archival notebook contains recipes for spells or props, including number '135. Burnt photograph. Pins.', which is probably in the museum's current 'Curses' display.[868] On first seeing the notebook I assumed that this recipe, among others, was Williamson's own and that he had created the artefact himself. However, the cultural historian Louise Fenton holds a different view, arguing that this curse was field-collected from a genuine user but that Williamson concealed its true origin to protect the anonymity of its maker.[869] Fenton has argued that Williamson encoded the names of people and places from whom and where he acquired artefacts, just as an oral historian or

[865] Hutton, 'Introduction' in Godwin, *Museum*, 9.
[866] Images in the MWM's archive show Williamson conducting rituals himself (Archive Box 2, item 53). These have the appearance of press photographs.
[867] MWM Archive Box 2, item 53.
[868] The notebook is stored in an uncatalogued MWM archive box labelled 'C Williamson Lists & Inventories'.
[869] Fenton researched and curated the exhibition 'Poppets, Pins and Power: The Craft of Cursing' at the MWM in 2017. In the exhibition's introductory text panel, Fenton argued that Williamson 'was very keen to protect his sources and what has been uncovered is that he had his own code' which he used when he 'wanted to hide the true location of an object'.

anthropologist might do.[870] Another ambiguous example, displayed in the museum's 'Protection' section, is a dead swift wrapped in bedclothes, described on its label as a charm to prevent miscarriage.[871] Although this sounds plausible, and a great variety of objects and assemblages have been found concealed across England with magical intent, there are no similar examples in other museums — indeed, no amulets at all said to protect against miscarriage specifically. In addition, the label indicates that this was Williamson's own interpretation of an object found concealed in a building, therefore by definition separated from its original intent; the enquirer wanted an answer, so Williamson provided one (*figure 8.14*).

Unlike earlier collections of folk magic, the MWM also contains a significant number of material curses. One example, made from twentieth century ladies' synthetic stockings, is unparalleled elsewhere. This is catalogued as a 'sea witch love charm consisting of wife's stocking, red wax-covered shell resting on a scallop shell saucer and a certain substance, from Combe Martin, 1937'.[872] Williamson's original text for a second stocking reads in his lively prose:

> Another lady, another stocking, and a substance in the foot section which need not be described for the sake of modesty, but interesting as an example of locking in a conjured spirit force. The lady, whose husband was a real stinker, cried no more for she acquired a dream lover, an

[870] MWM, '2017 Exhibition Poppets, Pins and Power: the Craft of Cursing', *www.museumof witchcraftandmagic.co.uk/exhibitions/2017-exhibition-poppets-pins-and-power-the-craft-of-cursing/,* (MWM, 2017), accessed 7 Sept. 2018.
[871] MWM 1019.
[872] MWM 258.

> incubus. From then on her husband was no more to her than the wallpaper. Location: Plymouth 1978.[873]

A third stocking-based artefact is catalogued yet more salaciously: 'Ladies' stocking knotted and containing four boar's tusks, a complicated spirit charm with a strong sexual overtone — yes, she the stocking owner did become a man-eater and she died a violent death as a result of her addiction'.[874] It is worth noting that there are also loose, unprovenanced boars' tusks amongst the collections in storage at the MWM. These were a common component of artefacts in ethnographic collections, and keenly collected by antiquarians and folklorists looking for examples of crescent symbolism (Ridgeway and Lovett, for example), so could easily have been re-appropriated by Williamson to create something new. One further unique artefact — a curse consisting, in Williamson's words, of a 'sexy red shoe, a poor wee sparrow done to death and frozen into a wax tomb of foot shoe space' — is attributed to 'Black Doris, the Union Street charmer'.[875] Plymouth's Union Street, near the docks and the naval base, was known at this time for its prostitution and nightlife; Black Doris is also the name of a species of New Zealand plum. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I have found no record of Black Doris, or indeed for any modern magical practitioners in the city, so it is difficult to know whether Williamson chose this name for a fictitious character or changed the name of an informant, or whether the name was used by a real (perhaps Black) woman.[876]

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[873] MWM 82.
[874] MWM 93.
[875] MWM 519.
[876] MWM 519. I have conducted a basic search of the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office's (now The Box, Plymouth's) catalogue but have yet to check local newspapers.

Williamson's unique artefacts — in contrast to things obtained by earlier collectors — display an uncommon emphasis on malevolent and sex-related magic. This could be a reflection of the changing nature of material available in a living tradition, or of trusting relationships between Williamson and the people from whom he collected sensitive material, or it could simply reflect his personal preoccupations. Perhaps he was following the tradition of cunning-folk, many of whom, in Owen Davies' words, were 'commercially hard-nosed, possessed a cynical streak, and were rather too prone to unscrupulous activities' themselves.[877] According to Davies, cunning folk continued to practice until the early-twentieth century, but if Williamson's collections are genuine, it would suggest that in the South West of England at least, they may have been active into the mid- to late-twentieth century as well. The questionable artefacts described above, however, sound as though they (like most of the amulets surveyed) were made for personal use rather than for others, so they could have been genuine but unique rather than typical examples.

The extraordinary amount of information accompanying Williamson's artefacts arouses suspicion. No previous collector recorded such detailed data about amulets' makers or the rituals surrounding their manufacture and use. Haddon aspired to collecting detailed contextual information; Herbert Toms achieved this to some extent by photographing and recording names and particulars provided by the people from whom he collected. Toms' subjects of study, however, were not witches or cunning folk but ordinary people who used amulets, and the information accompanying the objects was not nearly as

[877] Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 196-197.

comprehensive as Williamson's. Did the latter discover things that users had kept concealed from collectors like Lovett and Toms, or do they represent new practices in a century of rapid change? Did Williamson collect cultural material that had previously been ignored, or fabricate it?

As noted, replicas have been a standard part of the curatorial repertoire. Objects held by Victorian scientific museums were not always 'authentic' artefacts. Arnold has argued that through the physical objects they held, Victorian scientific 'museums guaranteed that truths could be recovered and then proved by any who doubted them'.[878] Haddon, for example, commissioned Torres Strait elders to create cardboard models of obsolete ritual masks from memory.[879] Similarly, a sheep's heart pierced with pins, now displayed at the PRM, was commissioned by Lovett from 'an old woman who in her youth prepared hearts thus to break evil spells' (*figure 8.15*).[880] Clarke of Scarborough added generic examples to his collection, such as a sprig of moonwort labelled 'Moonwort carried to reder the bearer invisible. 16th century' (*figure 8.16*).[881] Evidently, this particular sprig is not in itself five centuries old, but a representative example. Likewise, Williamson exhibited generic examples of herbs used in magic.[882] Props are often used to tell stories in museums, and remedial conservation can fabricate historical artefacts that are more replica than original.

[878] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 238.
[879] MAA Z9440 and Z9441.
[880] OXFPR 1911.75.
[881] SMT 1946.135.
[882] In a list of artefacts exhibited at Bourton-on-the-Water, numbers 401-403 are 'herbs various', from wood anemone to hag penny. The list is stored in an uncatalogued MWM box labelled 'C Williamson Lists & Inventories'.

Professional practice, however, requires that original and replica elements can be easily distinguished, so that the visitor is aware of the authenticity or otherwise of what they are seeing. It is the lack of clarity surrounding Williamson's artefacts which potentially tips them into the category of 'fakes'. This is important because of the emotional impact that 'real' objects can have on viewers, and because they can be used as inspiration for living traditions, as in the example above of 'Traditional Cornish Witchcraft'. This perspective calls to mind a Victorian notion that through extrasensory perception, 'psychometric' persons could literally get in touch with and understand ancient or distant people by handling their artefacts.[883] As we have seen, early anthropologists were still open to this idea as a real possibility. Williamson played on this inclination to make his objects seem, in Candlin's words, alive and 'working'.[884]

Elizabeth Edwards *et. al.* put forward their opinion that 'the Western valuation of seeing and hearing as primary senses for the production of rational knowledge and the keying of touch, smell and taste as lower and 'irrational' is fundamental to the Western sensory schema'.[885] In fact, everyday life includes all five senses and more, and it takes years of rigorous training to prioritise seeing and hearing.[886] Nevertheless, Edwards *et. al.* argue that museums, 'as key modern institutions that order and control world cultures, they have imposed Western classifications of knowledge and hierarchies of the senses on the objects within

[883] Denton and Denton, *Soul*.
[884] Candlin, *Micromuseology*.
[885] Edwards *et. al., Sensible Objects*, 2.
[886] Edwards *et. al.* themselves admit that 'the so-called five-sense model of sight, hearing touch, taste, and small that has developed to make sense of the world in Western cultures is only one such ordering, and is relatively recent in European history' (*Sensible Objects,* 5).

their walls'.[887] Briefly, in Boscastle, the floodwaters broke down both these walls and these sensory barriers, as people other than museum staff were given privileged, multi-sensory access to the objects, creating a new sense of community. The flood enabled volunteers to physically interact with objects, creating a deeper sense of belonging, but after the flood the exhibits were returned to their cases. Steve Patterson's contribution to the MWM's anniversary volume reminds us, though, that objects do not 'speak for themselves'; he recalls finding an object in the debris of the flood and wondering 'was it a wand or just a bit of old stick?'[888] The stories told on museum labels are crucial to the visitor's understanding and although 'museums are not neutral', they are generally trusted to provide accurate, or at least honest, information.[889]

Commentators differ in their assessments as to whether the presence of glass cases in museums adds to or detracts from the visitor's experience. Classen and Howes express the misgivings often expressed by museologists about misleading visitors with simulacra; 'at least when artifacts are represented in vitrines', they argue, 'most visitors realize that they are not seeing the "whole picture"'.[890] Arnold also defends glass cases, putting forward the unfashionable (and perhaps pragmatic) view that 'contrary to the unthinking assumption that allowing

[887] Edwards *et. al*., *Sensible Objects*, 17.
[888] S. Patterson, 'And It Still Goes On Today', in Godwin, *Museum*, 88-91. This situation brings to mind a catalogue card that I came across when working at the MAA, Cambridge in 2000. The card pertains to the Northcote.W. Thomas collection, a large and well-documented archive of artefacts from Southern Nigeria. The card identified the object as a '*nise*', 'used for making *ijejioku* (*ogugu ijejioku*)'.Someone had later crossed out these words and tersely added 'Destroyed. Simply a stick'. Clearly, the stick itself was of no import to the person who wrote this, with or without its story. I have since been able to consult a Nigerian anthropologist, Ohioma Pogoson, who tells me that a stick of this sort would have been used for stirring porridge, possibly with ritual intent.
[889] *Museums Are Not Neutral* is a campaign founded in 2017 to draw attention to the unavoidable political subjectivity of museums.
[890] Classen and Howes, 'Sensescape', 218.

visitors *to touch* exhibits might somehow elevate their experience… it is the essential tease that guarantees the engagement of their imagination. Being able to get hold of things in museums would in fact be a banal letdown'.[891] Classen and Howes, citing visitors' accounts from the Ashmolean and the BM, demonstrate that eighteenth century visitors routinely touched collections; however, as visitor numbers burgeoned during the nineteenth century, 'visitors were expected to become as close to pure spectators as possible'.[892] The MWM provides stimulation for all senses in the form of evocative sound (music and chanting), smell (incense) and 'interactives' such as Aleister Crowley's recorded voice, a fortune-telling machine and a 'sacred spring'. Both the presence of glass cases and the availability of multi-sensory engagement contribute to the museum's sense of authenticity and trustworthiness.

As visitors, the MWM keeps us guessing — is the past that we contact through its artefacts a real or an imagined one? Williamson took advantage of the reputation that museums have for telling scientific truths, but also of their role as ritual sites and quasi-religious institutions.[893] He made use of the ambivalent relationship that science and authority have with magic and enchantment. Michael Taussig makes the point that in revealing an Azande shaman's tricks as fraudulent (the technique behind the trick), Evans-Pritchard was missing the point of the public secret, that everyone knows but no-one articulates.[894] According to Taussig, the shaman's physical tricks are known by both the performer and their audience to

[891] Arnold, *Cabinets*, 100.
[892] Classen and Howes, 'Sensescape', 201, 208.
[893] Macdonald, 'Enchantment', 224.
[894] Taussig, 'Viscerality, Faith, and Skepticism: another theory of magic', in Meyer and Pels, *Magic,* 272-306.

be illusions, but suspension of disbelief in them is necessary for parallel — real — efficacy in the spirit world. Taussig calls this effect 'mimesis'. Ludwig Wittgenstein's 1967 critique of Frazer's *Golden Bough* displays a similar line of thought, arguing that ritual is not mistaken causality — the power of a ritual is in the ritual itself.[895] Similarly, according to Pearson, for some modern witches 'the point of the myth is to behave *as if* it were true'.[896] Our assessment of the MWM must depend on whether Gardner, Williamson and visiting 'modern' 'Western' witches have, like Evans-Pritchard, been 'playing a game'. If Gardner and Williamson consciously rejected scientific aspirations, the museum could be classified as 'postmodern'. If they never fully engaged with scientific rationality, the museum could be called 'nonmodern' in Latour's sense.[897]

8.7. Conclusion to Chapter 8

Collection and interpretation necessarily involve different types and levels of authenticity and inauthenticity. Nevertheless, the museum format has become so closely associated with trustworthy scientific truth that the boundaries of authenticity are difficult to distinguish at the MWM. Was Williamson a dedicated amateur social scientist and creative innovator, or a deceiver and fabricator? My assessment of his collection is that instead of making or commissioning objects to illustrate what were considered to be outmoded superstitious practices, as curators before him had done, he created them to authenticate the supposed continuity of English 'witchcraft'. He took inspiration from folk magic and

[895] Wittgenstain, *Golden Bough*.
[896] Pearson, 'Writing Witchcraft', 230.
[897] Latour, *Never Been Modern*.

Western occultism, but also from the international objects, beliefs and practices which he encountered overseas and in other museums. Sometimes he embroidered stories about types of object commonly found in collections elsewhere; sometimes he told new stories with familiar elements about new artefacts. The MWM is a cabinet of wonders for the perusal of all classes, giving credibility to Williamson's visions of witchcraft by presenting them in the physical form of a Victorian scientific institution. By putting objects in glass cases with labels and text panels and interactive elements, and by calling itself a 'museum', the MWM encourages trust in the truth of its contents. However 'authentic' or otherwise specific objects are, there is no doubt that Williamson played on visitors' expectations of a traditional, objective, modernist museum to make his claims more believable. Genuine amulets from earlier collections were essential contextual props used to give the museum's more far-fetched claims an air of truth and authenticity. This impression is enhanced by the density of 'real' artefacts packed into a building which, from the outside, looks quite small. If visitors implicitly trust museums, and if they believe that contact with objects equals understanding their previous owners, there is plenty of room here for visitors to confirm their own preconceptions, and for new tales being told to be taken as truths.

Since the 1980s at least, anthropologists have been concerned with how museum collections can contribute to cultural revival — Haddon's in the Torres Strait for example. It could be argued that Williamson's Museum of Witchcraft simply lived up to the democratic ideal of his English 'source community' representing itself. Human relationships create new artefacts. Why should we not choose to believe

him, one might argue, and to choose our own past? Conversely, academics including Hutton have put up a fight for firm facts upon which we can choose to build our own fictions or 'worlds'. This reconsideration of the MWM's collections has revealed another important point, however, attesting to the fact that not only have 'we' 'never been modern' but that 'we' have never been English. The influence of England's colonial history on both the collections and their interpretation reveals that at the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, as elsewhere, 'English magic' cannot be disentangled from its British imperial history.

CHAPTER 9. Conclusions

This thesis has contributed to knowledge by situating collections of English amulets within shifting historical and theoretical contexts in which they have been assembled and interpreted. My guiding question has been 'how have museum collections of English popular magic materialised relations between people and things in practice?' The study has provided a solid foundation for further research by establishing the parameters of these collections in terms of why and how they have been collected and interpreted (or not collected and not interpreted) through time. Using case studies, it has also explored the reasons why this happened at particular times, in particular places and through the agency of particular people, taking into consideration how patterns of collecting and interpretation have reflected shifting cultural emphases in academia and beyond. In doing so, it contributes to both histories of English museums and histories of English magic.

By clarifying relationships embodied in the most prominent collections, I have provided a contextual background for others undertaking more specific studies, for example of a particular collector (such as Lovett) or museum (such as the MWM) or type of amulet (such as fossils and stones), or of deliberately concealed objects, which have often been viewed in isolation. The intention of this exercise has been to enable more nuanced understandings and representations of these objects and assemblages by museum professionals and researchers responsible for their management and public interpretation, and by extension by audiences who encounter them in museums.

9.1. Relationships between people and things

Museum collections reflect and shape relationships between people and things on many levels, from the global to the personal, including those predicated on race, class, gender and religious background. I have therefore attempted to read back from the collections to the relationships which have formed them over time, and in which they have been involved at different stages in their 'social lives'. On a global, inter-cultural scale, the juxtaposition of English amulets with others from around the world is indicative of the colonial context in which they were first interpreted in museums. Their situation within international collections in powerful European institutions is indicative of colonial control made manifest in collecting practices. When our story begins in the mid-nineteenth century we find a wealthy gentleman, General Pitt-Rivers, materialising his global vision through acquiring and arranging artefacts, facilitated by the British Empire.

At that time, discoveries in geology, palaeontology and natural history had fundamental implications for how relationships between the natural and human worlds were understood. Issues of race became central to scholarly societies in which theoreticians and collectors were involved, as competing anthropologists and ethnologists supported opposing theories concerning the polygenesis or monogenesis of humanity. Pitt-Rivers, Tylor and Haddon were among those who enlisted artefacts in their attempts to prove the 'psychic unity' of humankind. Closely related to issues of race were those of religious background. The liberal humanist views of Tylor and Haddon, among others, were rooted in their nonconformist Protestant upbringing. As a non-Anglican, Tylor himself was

excluded from university posts until 1871. Even so, the negative Protestant association of Roman Catholics practices with magic, prevalent in England since the Reformation, has continually resurfaced, from Tylor's nineteenth-century theories to today's interpretations at the MWM.

On an intra-cultural scale within England itself, the representation of popular magic in museums reveals an economic dimension to patterns of collecting and cultural participation. The collecting habits of gentleman amateurs including Pitt-Rivers, Elworthy and Tylor were facilitated by their wealth. In the case of Pitt-Rivers, his private collection literally became an institution. Diverse objects formerly used in everyday life were assembled in museums by people with the power and privilege to do so. This was carried out with the express intention of slotting them into a hierarchical, evolutionary scheme in which English rural and urban working-class people were compared with colonial subjects overseas. English popular culture was first represented in museums in the second half of the nineteenth century in terms of the 'survival' in folklore of supposedly anachronistic modes of thought, with negatively valued 'superstition' seen to be a fundamental element of 'folklore'. Prior to this era folk magic, indeed popular culture more broadly, remained outside the remit of institutional collecting, which focussed on the exotic and valuable. Later in the nineteenth century, the development of university departments and scientific museums meant that salaried positions were available to a younger generation of middle-class men including Haddon and Balfour. In the early decades of the twentieth century, enthusiasts like Lovett and Clarke earned their living outside of the museum profession but sought to have their collections incorporated into existing

institutions. A generation later, at the turn of the twentieth century, Toms — an individual from a working-class background — was employed as a museum professional, albeit at a regional museum.

It was to be another half-century before women were able to hold professional positions in the same museums, although many women had already made substantial contributions to collecting and classifying material magic on an amateur or voluntary basis. Half of the PRM's pre-Second World War collectors of amulets were women, for example, and it was through the unpaid labour of Barbara Freire-Marreco and Winifred Blackman, both holders of Oxford University's Diploma in Anthropology, that most of the PRM's amulets were catalogued and classified in the years leading up to the First World War. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Catherine Toms shared her husband's work on folklore, but with no salaried recognition. Without Margaret Murray's far-reaching theoretical influence, the Museum of Witchcraft could not have been conceived. It was not until around Second World War, however, that societal changes allowed women to enter museums as salaried professionals. Beatrice Blackwood became the PRM's first paid female member of staff in 1939; Enid Porter was employed by the CCFM in 1947. From the 1930s onwards, once the flood of primary collecting slowed, attention in museums turned instead to the material's classification and analysis, notably by Ellen Ettlinger. Earlier enthusiasm for salvage collecting, and for making comprehensive 'series' of objects, left a documentation backlog which museum workers and volunteers (many of whom are women) are still dealing with today.

Material magic entered public collections concurrently with the emergence of human sciences, which in turn was bound up with the rise of cultural evolutionary theory; prior to this, only those objects and artefacts which were considered to be out of the ordinary or economically significant had been collected and studied by museums. The MAA and PRM were among the first institutions to seriously address the popular beliefs of working-class people — indeed, their lives more broadly — albeit within an evolutionary framework and under the auspices of modern science. Museums focusing on the lives of working-class people people were yet to emerge in Britain, while discipline of social history did not come into being until the 1960s. Material manifestations of popular magic first entered museums under the influence of progressionist theoreticians, notably Pitt-Rivers, followed by Tylor and Haddon. This occurred on the understanding that they were relics of the past and that the study of popular magic would speed its demise and replacement by scientific rationality. Ironically, given that collectors were trying to demonstrate that magic occupied the bottom rung on the evolutionary ladder of human thought, the presence of these items in museums fed continuing and renewed popular interest in magic, leading to the survival, adaptation and revival of ideas outmoded in academia, notably Margaret Murray's.

Collecting practices reveal how people perceive others, but also how they understand themselves. The private or subconscious opinions and actions of early human scientists were not always the same as their public or conscious ones. We have seen that museums have their roots in both working-class sideshows (entertainment, 'lower pleasures') and aristocratic cabinets of

curiosity (education, 'higher pleasures') and continue to experience a tug-of-war between these positively and negatively valued forms of curiosity. Early collectors and curators intended to enlighten their audiences, to convert them from superstition to science. But, as Wintle and Hill have explained, the curators' intended messages were not matched by audience reception of these. Collectors like Pitt-Rivers, Haddon, Balfour and Toms aspired to scientific objectivity, but the audiences whom they wished to educate and inform did not always share their point of view. At an intra-personal level, my case studies have highlighted contradictions between rational and irrational elements within, as well as between, individuals. Examples include Toms' and Lovett's precarious positions as both insiders and outsiders with regards to their belief in amulets, as well as Williamson's ambivalent attitude to magical practice. Objects of material magic could be relished as exotic curios not only by museum audiences, but — whether subconsciously or overtly — by collectors and curators. In the twenty-first century, academia has acknowledged that all humans partake of magical thinking as well as scientific thinking. The latter is no longer 'other', but a fully integral part of being human.

9.2. Relationships between magic, materiality and museums

The significance of English amulets, material magic and folklore in the history of museums differs from that of more prosaic artefacts such as tools or toys. The liminal nature of magic — mediating between the physical and spiritual worlds — echoes the zone which relationships inhabit, between people and people or people and things. The present study contributes to our understanding of

collectors, classifiers and theoreticians who have taken material magic seriously, as well as to how they have shaped and defined it. The concept of 'magic', used in the sense which brought these collections together, was an academic rather than a popular construct. Theoreticians and those who classified collections applied the term systematically to these objects but their makers, users and field collectors did not. As a late-nineteenth century scholarly consensus was reached about the definition of 'magic' in relation to its cultural evolutionary context, material examples flooded into museums; as this definition was challenged in the early-twentieth century, the flow slowed. Prior to this consensus fewer examples of amulets entered museums and, as Ettlinger pointed out, they were acquired for different reasons, such as their artistic or historical value. Some collectors assembled what they perceived to be examples of folklore, or superstition, or amulets against the evil eye, rather than 'magic'. Antiquarians collected popular magic or 'superstitions' with the professed hope that highlighting their users' 'vulgar errors' would help to eliminate them.[898] Elworthy and Hildburgh had more culturally specific areas of interest, in particular their fascination with the Mediterranean, embedded in their Classical education and the Grand Tour tradition of the Enlightenment era. Justified by the theories of Tylor, Frazer and Haddon, disparate collections were pulled together in museums under the overarching theme of 'magic'. The FLS' collections were later redistributed to partake in different academic agendas, including those concerned with folk-life and social anthropology, while amateur enthusiasts including occultists continue to collect material 'magic'.

[898] Browne, *Pseudodoxia*, also known as 'Vulgar Errors'.

Materialisation and institutionalisation of English amulets went hand-in-hand from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, as part of broader trends in ethnographic collecting. Active, mass collecting of English material magic was undertaken by museums primarily during, and in the aftermath of, a time when material culture was a principal tool in academic investigations. From its centrality in theories of human nature to its abandonment and later revival, the collection and interpretation of material magic has echoed its status in academia. At the high tide of colonial collecting theoreticians including Tylor and Haddon, both of whom considered themselves to be 'anthropologists', concurred that material things were central (rather than peripheral or irrelevant) to academic study. They collected material magic and built their theories around it. Academic interest in museum collecting peaked between the 1880s and 1920s but as it waned, it left behind concrete legacies in the form of collections open to re-interpretation. In the mid-twentieth century, although analyses of magic in relation to religion and science continued to concern anthropologists, their attention turned to 'the field' where they studied people in person rather than through their artefacts. Academic interests in materiality and magic have resurged in tandem since the 1980s as part of a broader 'material turn', with objects of English magic caught up in a wider drive to re-evaluate the colonial-era collections of which they are a part.

As Britain began to shed its colonies in the second half of the twentieth century, the issue of who has the right to represent whom became increasingly a matter for debate, which remains unresolved in practice today. As the interests of human sciences shifted away from museum collections, academic ideas seeped

into popular culture, creating continuity as well as disjunction between the first and second folk revivals. Murray's ideas were adapted by Gardner, Lovett's material was acquired by Williamson, and Toms transmitted his enthusiasms to Merrifield. From the 1990s onwards, academics increasingly, explicitly acknowledged that if they were to study 'others' with integrity, they must at least 'take them seriously', that is, try to understand insiders' viewpoints (whether 'rational' or otherwise) as opposed to imposing external frameworks. This shift has included taking seriously elements of humanity which were formerly considered not 'serious' enough to merit academic study: the senses instead of the mind, the material world as opposed to the spiritual world, magic as well as science and religion. It has led to the scholarly dilemma of how to 'take *x* seriously' whilst maintaining academic distance. Acknowledging 'the other within' oneself as an individual, as well as in one's own and others' societies, is a further step in the same direction. The MWM, for example, is seen by many as a place of spiritual inspiration, but by others as a fairground attraction which cashes in on misinformation. The authority or authenticity of different 'voices' remains a contentious issue.

The question 'what power is ascribed to which objects by whom?' has particular relevance for objects that have been considered to have inherent occult power. During their 'social lives', the power, status and presumed agency of the objects themselves has shifted. To their original makers and users, they were functional objects used to cure ills and prevent misfortune. To their early modern detractors, they were the Devil's work. In the modern era, they became agents of inertia as symbols of lingering ignorance in an enlightened world. From the mid-

nineteenth until the early-twentieth century, they were co-opted as scientific specimens. As anthropologists' and folklorists' interests moved away from objects after WWI, these objects were set free once again for alternative interpretations. Since the Second World War, they have become tools for people trying to make connections with their predecessors or discover hidden powers within themselves. If we are to take our contemporary subjects seriously, the amulets' literal magical power remains open to debate.

9.3. Relationships between academic disciplines

Collections of objects with magical reputations in English museums hold particular interest because, having once held a distinct position in academia, they became increasingly liminal as disciplines separated and specialised. English amulets were nested within collections that encompassed Britain, Europe and the world. The cultural importance of evolutionary theories can be seen in both the natural sciences (geology, palaeontology, natural history) and in newly defined human sciences (archaeology, anthropology, folklore) which emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century. At the high tide of colonial collecting in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries archaeology and folklore, as well as physical anthropology and ethnology were sub-disciplines of an over-arching anthropology. Their separation in the early decades of the twentieth century, particularly around the First World War, is echoed by the redistribution of amulets and wider folklore collections in the mid-twentieth century.

The fate of material magic was different in relation to anthropology, archaeology and folklore. As anthropological theory moved away from the comparative method and towards cultural specificity, international comparisons were no longer considered appropriate and active field collecting slowed. Archaeology, by contrast, retained its essential focus on material culture. The field collection of English magical artefacts as scientific specimens continued under Toms in the 1930s, Merrifield from the 1950s, and their followers in the 1980s and beyond. In the field of folklore, the FLS' impetus to collect had faded by the 1920s, while attempts to set up a national folk museum continued to stall. The FLS finally divested itself of responsibility for its material holdings in the 2010s by transferring title of its Starr and Owen collections to the MAA, which had housed them for over a century. For a time, the MAA's Folklore Cabinet and the PRM's magic and amulets displays both continued to serve as physical reminders of a time when material magic served a core purpose in the broadly defined discipline of anthropology.

9.4. Finale

Postmodernity has acknowledged the nonmodern, irrational dimension within all humans, as well as the important part played by material things in human lives and relationships. But if all humans partake of magical thinking what, if anything, is culturally specific about 'Western thought'? Perhaps it is that Westerners are postmodern rather than nonmodern; unquestioning belief is different from deciding to believe. Self-awareness leads to doublethink of the sort that Michael Taussig describes, where 'the point of the myth is to behave *as*

if it were true';[899] freedom of thought allows irrational beliefs to be adopted at will. Taking magic seriously has coincided with taking materiality seriously, hence the current upsurge in academic fascination with magic, material or otherwise. As I write this conclusion in 2021, the fundamental importance of magic in human history and culture — equal to that of religion and science — is being acknowledged in academia, with two major new histories of magic added to the academic repertoire — Chris Gosden's *The History of Magic* and a forthcoming multi-volume *Cultural History of Magic*.[900] My examination of the history of collections adds a museological dimension to the conversation.

This study has considered the agency and social lives not only of individual artefacts, but of tacit coteries of people and things centred on collections as agentive entities in themselves. My case studies demonstrate that the social power of an assemblage of objects is greater than the sum of its parts; the physical presence of these things *en masse* generates interest and new interpretations. Collecting itself has shaped the theory and practice of magic by leaving a partial record, shaped at the time when the objects were assembled. The continued materiality of objects in museums became one of the mechanisms through which ideas outmoded in academia entered popular consciousness. The very existence of these collections, even at times when and in places where they were academically dormant, enabled their potential power and 'extended agency' to grow and spread. Like fungal mycelium, collections of English material

[899] Pearson, 'Writing Witchcraft', 230.
[900] C. Gosden, *The History of Magic: from Alchemy to Witchcraft, from the Ice Age to the Present* (London: Penguin Books, 2020). The *Cultural History* is due to be published by Bloomsbury in 2021.

magic continued to exist 'underground' (in museum stores) with only their fruit on public view, in the form of longstanding or temporary museum displays and increasingly, their presence online and in other media. Objects of material magic are 'alive and working' in the sense that they continue to perform as agents of cultural change. Their materiality also allows us to re-examine them with the intention of revealing less audible relationships within their histories, including the agency of women in defining and defending magic, or the colonial histories in which they are embedded. Our responsibility as museum professionals must be to nourish roots and nurture shoots, enabling new relationships to be formed whilst acknowledging that their fruit will be unpredictable.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Ashmolean	Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology
BAAS	British Association for the Advancement of Science
BCMAG	Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery
BHAC	Brighton and Hove Archaeological Club
BMAG	Brighton Museum and Art Gallery
BMNH	Booth Museum of Natural History
CCFM	Cambridge and County Folk Museum
FLS	Folklore Society
Horniman	Horniman Museum and Gardens
MA	Museums Association
MAA	Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge
MAE	Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge
MEG	Museum Ethnographers Group
MERL	Museum of English Rural Life
MGLA	Museum of General and Local Archaeology, Cambridge
MoC	Museum of Cambridge
MoS	Museum of Somerset, Taunton
MWM	Museum of Witchcraft and Magic
NMW	National Museum of Wales
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
PRM	Pitt Rivers Museum
(J)(R)AI	(Journal of the) (Royal) Anthropological Institute
RAMM	Royal Albert Memorial Museum
RGS	Royal Geographical Society
SAHNS	Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
SAS	Sussex Archaeological Society
SMT	Scarborough Museums Trust
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum
WHMM	Wellcome Historical Medical Museum
WML	World Museum Liverpool

APPENDIX: TABLES

Table 1: Fields used in English amulets survey spreadsheet

Column	Field name	Explanation	Comment
A	Institution	Name of institution in which objects were held at time of survey	17 different institutions with 1-544 accessions
B	Cat. year	Year in which objects were allocated a catalogue number, if known	Dates range 1873-2013 (not necessarily the year in which they entered the institution)
C	Cat. No.	Institution's catalogue number/s	Some include year of accession, others allocated in retrospect
D	No. of objects	Number of objects accessioned under one catalogue number	Range from 1 (applies to most objects) to 56 (pins from a wishing well)
E	Dept.	Institutional department, e.g. 'Anthropology' at MAA, 'Prehistory and Europe' at BM	197 accessions have sub-departments, showing how they have been classified
F	Object name	Wider categories e.g. 'Animal', broken down into narrower categories e.g. 'Mole's foot', 'Bat's wing'	Based on institution's categorisation but also allocated by myself for sorting purposes
G	Mus. object name	The object name allocated by the institution	Provided for 551 objects
H	Vernacular	Some institutions list a vernacular name separately, e.g. 'cramp nut' or 'thunderbolt'	111 objects
I	Category	4 institutions provide this (MoW, IWM, PRM, MAA) e.g. 'religious object'	Only included when allocated by the institution; 882 objects; can be multiple
J	Material	Various - animal, vegetable and mineral	Allocated by the institution or by myself, often multiple
K	Description	Taken from the institution's catalogue, where available	Free-text, can be lengthy, not sortable

cont.

Table 1 (cont.)

L	Cat. notes	Lengthy notes field provided by some institutions, e.g. PRM, Cuming	Free-text, can be lengthy, not sortable
M	General use	The general purpose of the amulet e.g. luck, protection, health	Categories allocated by myself for sorting and quantification; occasionally multiple
N	Specific use	More precise use, e.g. 'protection' could be against 'fairies' or 'witchcraft'; 'health' could be against 'rheumatism' or 'cramp'	Categories allocated by myself for sorting and quantification
O	How used	Information taken from catalogue only, e.g. 'hung up in a stable', 'carried in the pocket'	Sorted to quantify the ways that the amulets were used; available for a minority of objects
P	Used by	Any information about who used the object, whether a personal name or a generic category, e.g. 'soldier', 'woman'	I standardised these terms in order to sort them
Q	Sex of user	I added 'M' or 'F' where known	Sorted to quantify gender
R	User source	How the original user acquired the object e.g. 'grandfather', 'girlfriend'	Only 6 records give this information
S	Use date	Date of use, if known; often a *terminus ante quem* based on accession date	Institutions asses this differently; the collector's life-dates are sometimes given
T	Source	Immediate source the institution obtained it from, whether an individual donor or institutional transfer	Names standardised therefore sortable
U	Source date	Date the item was acquired by the institution	Sometimes coincides with accession date
V	Source type	How acquired by the institution	Gift, transfer, purchase, loan, deposit, bequest etc.
W	Source 2	The source name prior to the immediate source	For objects transferred from another institution, this field would say how that institution obtained it

cont.

Table 1 (cont.)

X	Source 2 type	As per 'source type', but often named field collector	Gift, transfer, purchase, loan, deposit, bequest etc.
Y	Source 3	As 'source 2' but one step removed	Less than half have this information
Z	Source 3 type	As 'source 3' but one step removed	Less than half have this information
AA	Place	Place of field-collection	Can be as broad as 'England' or as narrow as a village; I have added English regions for sorting purposes
AB	Origin	Place where object originated prior to field collection, e.g. an Italian amulet used in London	Only given for 100 objects; may be accurate, or collector's assumption
AC, AD, AE	Loc 1, Loc 2, Loc 3	These 3 fields refer to the object's storage locations within the institution	Useful for knowing if the object is currently on display
AF, AG	Archive ref 1, archive ref 2	Reference numbers for associated archival material within the institution	About a third of the objects or collections have an archival or published reference
AH	Ethnic group	Field taken from the MAA's catalogue, includes 'European English', 'British', 'Gypsy' etc.	Only the PRM consistently use 'English'; I selected other English objects by their place of origin
AI	Photo	Institution's reference number for photo of object	Field rarely used
AJ	Notes	Used for my queries, suggestions, publication references etc.	Any queries or suggestions of my own not derived from catalogue

Table 2: Museums surveyed, with number of English amulets they hold

Museum	English region /country	Opening date	Number of English amulets	Amulets from Lovett?	Other amulets?
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford	South East	1884	544	Yes (Y)	Y
Scarborough Museums Trust	North East	1829/1840	294	Y	Y
Museum of Witchcraft, Boscastle	Cornwall	1960	279	Y	Y
Horniman Museum and Gardens	London	1901	173	Y	Y
Science Museum/Wellcome Collection	London	1913	158	Y	No (N)
Cuming Museum	London	1906	81	Y	N
National Museum Wales, St. Fagan's	Wales	1948	42	Y	N
Imperial War Museum	London	1917	36	Y	N
Bradford Museums and Galleries	North West	1892/1904	29	N	Y
Museum of Cambridge	East of England	1936	28	Y	Y
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge	East of England	1884	23	N	Y
Brighton Museum and Art Gallery	South East	1856	16	N	Y
British Museum	London	1759	9	N	Y
Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery	South West	1872	8	Y	N
Somerset Museums, Taunton	South West	1874	6	N	Y
Wiltshire Museum, Devizes	South West	1873	4	N	Y
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford	South East	1683	1	N	Y

Table 3: Geographical origins of English amulets surveyed, by quantity

English region / country	Number of English amulets
London	416
England (unprovenanced)	342
North East	273
South West	202
Britain (probably English)	183
South East (not London)	139
East of England	103
Midlands	22
North West	14
France (used by English soldiers)	4

Table 4: Recorded uses of English amulets

Broad category	Broad category total	Sub-category	Sub-category number
Protection (for/against)	533		
		Warfare: bombs, shells, gunfire (WWI soldiers' amulets)	155
		Lightning, thunder	86
		Witchcraft	71
		Evil eye	62
		Protection unspecified (many used by soldiers, presumably for safety in warfare)	28
		Nightmares	22
		Animals	18
		Drowning, safety at sea	17
		Evil, Devil, spirits (religious / Biblical connotations)	15
		Travel	12
		Danger	7
		Agriculture	3
		Accidents; injury	2 each
		Theft; Mad dogs; poverty; seagull mess; weather; fairies; spiders; snakes; avoid cutting friendship; the rest are unspecified	1 each
Luck	436		
Healing, health	356	See Table 3 for details	See Table 3 details
Unspecified	234	Many of these are described as 'charm or 'amulet' and probably fall into the general 'luck' or 'protection' categories	

cont.

Table 4 (cont.)

Specific benefits	83	Agriculture; Bread; Fishing - fishes, a good catch, good luck in herring fishing; Good fortune; Marital felicity; Plenty & prosperity Strength & wisdom; and foresight; The peace of the Lord; Long life; Wealth, plenty of money; Contentment, love, health, prosperity, courage, hope, friends; Gaming Guidance and good luck; Hunting, good luck in foxhunting; Fair weather; Good health; Fecundity; Love; Safety at sea; Victory over enemies; others unspecified	1 of each
Love	26		
Religious (Christian)	25	Some unspecified, others protect against evil eye, throat disease, blasphemy	
Counter-witchcraft	8	'To break the spell of witchcraft', 'to exorcise and punish a witch', 'breaking evil spells', 'to right a real or imagined wrong'	
Used in witchcraft (malevolent magic)	6	2 'witches ladders'; 2 animal hearts and 1 lump of clay stuck with pins; 1 acorn-shaped box (the latter seems unlikely)	
Wishing	2	Pins from a wishing well; a holed stone said to be a 'wishing stone'	

Table 5: English amulets used for health and healing, by quantity

Ailment or health issue	Object types used	Number of examples
Cramp	Cockspur, eel skin, hare's foot, mole's foot, moorhen's foot, pigeon's foot, sheep bone, bag of corks, fossil shark's tooth, fungus *Daldinia concentrica*, agate, ring of twigs	82
Rheumatism	Piece of amber (sometimes heart-shaped), mole's foot, rabbit's foot, animal bone (often astralagus), piece of coal, copper bangle, ring made from a penny or other metal, bottle of mercury, conker, nutmeg, dried potato, seaweed stem *Laminaria digitatus*, chalk, sulphur, rue, cat skin	72
Toothache	Tooth-shaped stone, mole's foot	37
Colds, including coughs and sore throats	Glass bead necklace, coral necklace, oak gall necklace	20
Teething	Baby's dummy made of coral, nightshade necklace, pimento seeds or orris (iris) root, bag of grass, flint nodule, calf's or human tooth, tooth-shaped stone	19
Fits / epilepsy	Dried frog, ash twigs, iron nail	17
Warts	Slug on thorn, various stones, knotted string, elder twig	12
Fertility	Silver screw, phallic stone, mandrake root, artefacts incorporating cowrie shells, buttons depicting toadstools, glass fish charms	10
Bronchitis	Glass bead necklace	8
Gout	Leg- and foot-shaped flints, acorn	8
Diarrhoea	Necklace or string of acorns	7
Bleeding, including nosebleed and healing wounds	Bloodstone, carnelian pendant, orange-red flint, red silk cord	5
Smallpox	Coral brooch, stone, holed stone	4

cont.

Table 5 (cont.)

Eyesight	Bat's wing	3
Sore throat	Coral necklace, oak gall necklace	3
Whooping cough	Human hair, human hair necklace, 'tarred string' necklace (possibly human hair)	3
Earache	Whelk shell	2
Hernia	Split ash-tree	2
Lumbago	Necklace of snake bones, bottle of mercury	2
Constipation	Seed pod *Cassia fistula*	1
Chilblains	Fossil shark's tooth	1
Childbirth	Sea bean *Entada rheedii*	1
Increase flow of breast milk	Breast-shaped piece of lead	1
Liver complaints	Stone	1
Miscarriage	Body of a bird wrapped in bedclothes	1
Obesity	Seed pod resembling abdomen	1
Pregnancy	Geode resembling vulva	1
Promote flow of urine	Polished grey stone	1
Rickets	Chicken wishbone	1

Table 6: The PRM's 'magic, ritual, religion and belief' displays

Case no.	Case title	No. of objects	Provenance	Characterisation of contents
C26A	Amulets and Charms	40	Americas, Melanesia, Australia	Larger magical/religious objects as well as those more recognisable as 'charms'
C27A		72	Asia (China, Japan, India, Tibet, Malaysia, Burma etc.)	Charms relating to the 'world' religions of Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism, as well as Shintoism and more local traditions
C28A		42	Africa (West)	Includes larger objects such as a Ghanaian Ashanti fertility figures
C29A	Amulets, Charms and Divination	55	Africa (North, South, East, Central); modern and ancient Egypt	North African material both Islamic and Mediterranean Christian, including crescent-shaped items like Ridgeway's in Cambridge
C30A	Charms against the Evil Eye	178	Italy and other European; Brazil, North Africa, West Asia	Italian silver charms against the evil eye, *cimaruta*, hands of Fatima, blue glass beads
C30B (above C30A)	Amulets, Cures and Charms	39	Mostly Italy, also China, Algeria, Vanuatu	Sea-related charms including dried, glass and silver sea-horses, and representations of mer-people
C31A	Magic and Trial by Ordeal	55	Various, inc. Britain, Europe (Italy, Germany), Asia, Americas, Oceania	Eclectic; British material includes rowan loops and crosses, 'kern babies', a glass 'witch ball' and Margaret Murray's famous Sussex 'witch bottle'; Mediterranean charms
C31B (above C30A)	Amulets and Charms for Animals	15	Asia and Europe inc. Syria, Turkey, Norway	Material from the countries listed is largely from Lovett, Blackwood and Balfour respectively
C32A		32	Europe (various), India (1)	Almost exclusively ex-votos; one Indian wax head from Balfour